HISTORY of the REFORMATION

1

of the SIXTEENTH CENTURY

JEAN HENRI MERLE-D'AUBIGNÉ

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OF THE

REFORMATION

OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

BY J. H. MERLE D'AUBIGNÉ.

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FOREWORD

This edition has been reproduced by Light of the World Publication Company. This book intends to enlighten on the real controversies at stake, as reflected in unabated strife and multiple moral dilemmas. The account and illustrations are specially designed and incorporated to edify the reader on pertinent developments in the historical, scientific, philosophical, educational, religio-political, socio-economic, legal and spiritual spheres. Moreover, clear and undisputed patterns and correlations may be discerned wherein may be perceived the networking, interworking and overlapping of antithetical, yet harmonious schools of thought.

Earth's long trajectory of coercion, conflict and compromise has prepared the platform for the emergence of a New Age. Burning questions attend the advent of this anticipated new era, accompanied by its superstructures, systems of governance, rights-based regimes and ideals of freedom and happiness. Chequered in base deception, strategic repression and objectives of new world order, this e-book connects the dots between modern realities, spiritual mysteries and divine revelation. It traces the chronological progress from national catastrophe to global dominance, the destruction of an old system and the forging of a new; succinctly illuminating on love, human nature and even supernatural intervention.

Time and again, remarkable events have moulded the course of life and history, while even prefiguring the future. Living in times of great turbulence and uncertainty, the future has been but dimly comprehended. Thankfully, this work enables a panoramic vision of both past and future, highlighting critical moments of time which have unfolded in fulfilment to prophecy.

Although birthed in unpromising conditions, afflicted in gruelling crucibles, several individuals have resolved, persevered in virtue and sealed their faith, leaving an ineffaceable mark. Their contributions have shaped modernity and paved the road for a marvellous culmination and imminent change. Therefore, this literature serves as both inspiration and practical tool for a penetrative and profound understanding behind social issues, religion and politics. Each chapter narrates on both the world and the human condition, enshrouded in darkness, embattled in keen clashes, and impelled by sinister, hidden agendas and ulterior motives. Here, these are unashamedly exposed to plain view. Nevertheless, every page radiates with resplendent rays of courage, deliverance and hope.

Ultimately, it is our fervent desire that every reader experience, grow to love and accept truth. In a world permeated with lies, ambiguity and manipulation, truth will forever stand as the quintessential longing in the soul. Truth engenders life, beauty, wisdom and grace; resulting in renewed purpose, vigour and a genuine, yet personal transformation in perspective and life.

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CHAPTER 1

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The enfeebled world was tottering on its foundations when Christianity appeared. The national religions which had satisfied the parents, no longer proved sufficient for their children. The new generations could not repose contented within the ancient forms. The gods of every nation, when transported to Rome, there lost their oracles, as the nations themselves had there lost their liberty. Brought face to face in the Capitol, they had destroyed each other, and their divinity had vanished. A great void was occasioned in the religion of the world.

A kind of deism, destitute alike of spirit and of life, floated for a time above the abyss in which the vigorous superstitions of antiquity had been engulfed. But like all negative creeds, it had no power to reconstruct. National prepossessions disappeared with the fall of the national gods. The various kingdoms melted one into the other. In Europe, Asia, and Africa, there was but one vast empire, and the human race began to feel its universality and unity. Then the Word was made flesh. God appeared among men, and as man, to save that which was lost. In Jesus of Nazareth dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

This is the greatest event in the annals of the world. Former ages had prepared the way for it: The latter ages flow from it. It is the centre of their bond of unity. Henceforward the popular superstitions had no meaning, and the slight fragments preserved from the general wreck of incredulity vanished before the majestic orb of eternal truth.

The son of man lived thirty-three years on earth, healing the sick, converting sinners, not having where to lay his head, and displaying in the midst of this humiliation such greatness and holiness, such power and divinity, as the world had

never witnessed before. He suffered and died—he rose again and ascended into heaven. His disciples, beginning at Jerusalem, travelled over the Roman empire and the world, everywhere proclaiming their Master as the author of everlasting life. From the midst of a people who despised all nations, came forth a mercy that invited and embraced all men. A great number of Asiatics, of Greeks, and of Romans, hitherto dragged by their priests to the feet of dumb idols, believed the Word. It suddenly enlightened the whole earth, like a beam of the sun. 1 A breath of life began to move over this wide field of death. A new people, a holy nation, was formed upon the earth; and the astonished world beheld in the disciples of the Galilean a purity and self-denial, a charity and heroism, of which it had retained no idea.

Two principles especially distinguished the new religion from all the human systems that fled before it. One had reference to the ministers of its worship, the other to its doctrines. The ministers of paganism were almost the gods of these human religions. The priests of Egypt, Gaul, Dacia, Germany, Britain, and India, led the people, so long at least as their eyes were not opened.

Jesus Christ, indeed, established a ministry, but he did not found a separate priesthood: he dethroned these living idols of the world, destroyed an overbearing hierarchy, took away from man what he had taken from God, and reestablished the soul in immediate connection with the divine fountain of truth, by proclaiming himself sole Master and sole Mediator. "One is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren."

1Ohm tis elion bole. Eusebius, Hist. Eccles. 2:3.

As regards doctrine, human systems had taught that salvation is of man: the religions of the earth had devised an earthly salvation. They had told men that heaven would be given to them as a reward: they had fixed its price; and what a price! The religion of God taught that salvation comes from him alone; that it is a gift from heaven; that it emanates from an amnesty—from the grace of the Sovereign Ruler: "God hath given to us eternal life."

Undoubtedly Christianity cannot be summed up in these two points; but they seem to govern the subject, as far as history is concerned. And as it is impossible for me to trace the opposition between truth and error in all its features, I have been compelled to select the most prominent.

Such were the two constituent principles of the religion that then took possession of the Roman empire and of the world. With these we are within the true limits of

Christianity, and beyond them Christianity disappears. On their preservation or their loss depended its greatness or its fall. They are closely connected: for we cannot exalt the priests of the Church or the works of the faithful without lowering Christ in his twofold quality of Mediator and Redeemer. One of these principles was to predominate in the history of the religion; the other in its doctrine. They both reigned at the beginning. Let us enquire how they were lost; and let us commence by tracing the destiny of the former.

The Church was in the beginning a community of brethren, guided by a few of the brethren. All were taught of God, and each had the privilege of drawing for himself from the divine fountain of light. The Epistles which then settled the great questions of doctrine did not bear the pompous title of a single man—of a ruler. We learn from the Holy Scriptures, that they began simply with these words: "The apostles and elders and brethren send greetings unto the brethren."

But these very writings of the apostles already foretell that from the midst of this brotherhood there shall arise a power that will destroy this simple and primitive order.

Let us contemplate the formation and trace the development of this power so alien to the Church. Paul of Tarsus, one of the greatest apostles of the new religion, had arrived at Rome, the capital of the empire and of the world, preaching in bondage the salvation which cometh from God. A Church was formed beside the throne of the Caesars. Composed at first of a few converted Jews, Greeks, and Roman citizens, it was rendered famous by the teaching and the death of the Apostle of the Gentiles. For a time it shone out brightly, as a beacon upon a hill. Its faith was everywhere celebrated; but erelong it declined from its primitive condition. It was by small beginnings that both imperial and Christian Rome advanced to the usurped dominion of the world.

The first pastors or bishops of Rome early employed themselves in converting the neighbouring cities and towns. The necessity which the bishops and pastors of the Campagna felt of applying in cases of difficulty to an enlightened guide, and the gratitude they owed to the church of the metropolis, led them to maintain a close union with it. As it has always happened in analogous circumstances, this reasonable union soon degenerated into dependence. The bishops of Rome considered as a right that superiority which the surrounding Churches had freely yielded. The encroachments of power form a great part of history; as the resistance of those whose liberties are invaded forms the other portion. The ecclesiastical power could not

escape the intoxication which impels all who are lifted up to seek to mount still higher. It obeyed this general law of human nature.

Nevertheless, the supremacy of the Roman bishops was at that period limited to the superintendence of the Churches within the civil jurisdiction of the prefect of Rome. But the rank which this imperial city held in the world offered a prospect of still greater destinies to the ambition of its first pastor. The respect enjoyed by the various Christian bishops in the second century was proportionate to the rank of the city in which they resided. Now Rome was the largest, richest, and most powerful city in the world. It was the seat of empire, the mother of nations. "All the inhabitants of the earth belong to her," said Julian; and Claudian declared her to be "the fountain of laws."

If Rome is the queen of cities, why should not her pastor be the king of bishops? Why should not the Roman church be the mother of Christendom? Why should not all nations be her children, and her authority their sovereign law? It was easy for the ambitious heart of man to reason thus. Ambitious Rome did so.

Thus, when pagan Rome fell, she bequeathed to the humble minister of the God of peace, sitting in the midst of her ruins, the proud titles which her invincible sword had won from the nations of the earth.

The bishops of the different parts of the empire, fascinated by that charm which Rome had exercised for ages over all nations, followed the example of the Campagna, and aided this work of usurpation. They felt a pleasure in yielding to the bishop of Rome some portion of that honour which was due to the queen of the world. There was originally no dependence implied in the honour thus paid. They treated the Roman pastor as if they were on a level with him. But usurped power increased like an avalanche. Admonitions, at first simply fraternal, soon became absolute commands in the mouth of the pontiff. A foremost place among equals appeared to him a throne.

The Western bishops favoured this encroachment of the Roman pastors, either from jealousy of the Eastern bishops, or because they preferred submitting to the supremacy of a pope, rather than to the dominion of a temporal power. On the other hand, the theological sects that distracted the East, strove, each for itself, to interest Rome in its favour; they looked for victory in the support of the principal church of the West.

Rome carefully enregistered these applications and intercessions, and smiled to see all nations voluntarily throwing themselves into her arms. She neglected no opportunity of increasing and extending her power. The praises and flattery, the exaggerated compliments and consultations of other Churches, became in her eyes and in her hands the titles and documents of her authority. Such is man exalted to a throne: the incense of courts intoxicates him, his brain grows dizzy. What he possesses becomes a motive for attaining still more.

The doctrine of the Church and the necessity of its visible unity, which had begun to gain ground in the third century, favoured the pretensions of Rome. The Church is, above all things, the assembly of "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Corinthians 1:2)— "the assembly of the firstborn which are written in heaven" (Hebrews 12:23). Yet the Church of our Lord is not simply inward and invisible; it is necessary that it should be manifested, and it is with a view to this manifestation that the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper were instituted. The visible Church has features different from those which distinguish it as an invisible Church. The invisible Church, which is the body of Christ, is necessarily and eternally one. The visible Church no doubt partakes of the unity of the former; but, considered by itself, plurality is a characteristic already ascribed to it in the New Testament. While speaking of one Church of God, it no sooner refers to its manifestation to the world, than it enumerates "the Churches of Galatia, of Macedonia, of Judea, all Churches of the saints." These Churches may undoubtedly, to a certain extent, look for visible unity; but if this union be wanting, they lose none of the essential qualities of the Church of Christ. The strong bond which originally united the members of the Church, was that living faith of the heart which connected them all with Christ as their common head. Different causes soon concurred to originate and develop the idea of a necessity for external union. Men accustomed to the political forms and associations of an earthly country, carried their views and habits into the spiritual and eternal kingdom of Christ.

Persecution, powerless to destroy or even to shake this new community, made it only the more sensible of its own strength, and pressed it into a more compact body. To the errors that sprung up in the theosophic schools and in the various sects, was opposed the one and universal truth received from the apostles, and preserved in the Church. This was well, so long as the invisible and spiritual Church was identical with the visible and external Church. But a great separation took place erelong: the form and the life became disunited. The semblance of an identical and exterior organisation was gradually substituted for that interior and spiritual communion, which is the essence of the religion of God. Men forsook the precious perfume of faith, and bowed down before the empty vessel that had contained it. They sought other

bonds of union, for faith in the heart no longer connected the members of the Church; and they were united by means of bishops, archbishops, popes, mitres, canons, and ceremonies. The living Church retiring gradually within the lonely sanctuary of a few solitary hearts, an external Church was substituted in its place, and all its forms were declared to be of divine appointment. Salvation no longer flowing from the Word, which was henceforward put out of sight, the priests affirmed that it was conveyed by means of the forms they had themselves invented, and that no one could attain it except by these channels. No one, said they, can by his own faith attain to everlasting life. Christ communicated to the apostles, and these to the bishops, the unction of the Holy Spirit; and this Spirit is to be procured only in that order of succession! Originally, whoever possessed the spirit of Jesus Christ was a member of the Church; now the terms were inverted, and it was maintained that he only who was a member of the Church could receive the Spirit.

As these ideas became established, the distinction between the people and the clergy was more strongly marked. The salvation of souls no longer depended entirely on faith in Christ, but also, and in a more especial manner, on union with the Church. The representatives and heads of the Church were made partakers of the trust that should be placed in Christ alone, and became the real mediators of their flocks. The idea of a universal Christian priesthood was gradually lost sight of; the servants of the Church of Christ were compared to the priests of the old covenant; and those who separated from the bishop were placed in the same rank with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram! From a peculiar priesthood, such as was then formed in the Church, to a sovereign priesthood, such as Rome claims, the transition was easy.

In fact, no sooner was the erroneous notion of the necessity for a visible unity of the Church established, than another appeared—the necessity for an outward representation of that union. Although we find no traces in the Gospel of Peter's superiority over the other apostles; although the very idea of a primacy is opposed to the fraternal relations which united the brethren, and even to the spirit of the Gospel dispensation, which on the contrary requires all the children of the Father to "minister one to another," acknowledging only one teacher and one master; although Christ had strongly rebuked his disciples, whenever ambitious desires of pre-eminence were conceived in their carnal hearts the primacy of St. Peter was invented and supported by texts wrongly interpreted, and men next acknowledged in this apostle and in his self-styled successors at Rome, the visible representatives of visible unity—the heads of the universal Church.

The constitution of the Patriarchate contributed in like manner to the exaltation of the Papacy. As early as the three first centuries the metropolitan Churches had

enjoyed peculiar honour. The council of Nice, in its sixth canon, mentions three cities, whose Churches, according to it, exercised a long-established authority over those of the surrounding provinces: these were Alexandria, Rome, and Antioch. The political origin of this distinction is indicated by the name which was at first given to the bishops of these cities: they were called Exarchs, from the title of the civil governors. Somewhat later they received the more ecclesiastical appellation of Patriarchs. We find this title first employed at the council of Constantinople, but in a different sense from that which it afterwards received. It was not until shortly before the council of Chalcedon that it was given exclusively to the great metropolitans. The second general council created a new patriarchate, that of Constantinople itself, the new Rome, the second capital of the empire. The church of Byzantium, so long obscure, enjoyed the same privileges, and was placed by the council of Chalcedon in the same rank as the Church of Rome. Rome at that time shared the patriarchal supremacy with these three churches. But when the Mahometan invasion had destroyed the sees of Alexandria and of Antioch,—when the see of Constantinople fell away, and in later times even separated from the West, Rome remained alone, and the circumstances of the times gathered all the Western Churches around her see, which from that time has been without a rival.

New and more powerful friends than all the rest soon came to her assistance. Ignorance and superstition took possession of the Church, and delivered it, fettered and blindfold, into the hands of Rome.

Yet this bondage was not effected without a struggle. Frequently did the Churches proclaim their independence; and their courageous voices were especially heard from Proconsular Africa and from the East.

But Rome found new allies to stifle the cries of the churches. Princes, whom those stormy times often shook upon their thrones, offered their protection if Rome would in its turn support them. They conceded to her the spiritual authority, provided she would make a return in secular power. They were lavish of the souls of men, in the hope that she would aid them against their enemies. The power of the hierarchy which was ascending, and the imperial power which was declining, leant thus one upon the other, and by this alliance accelerated their twofold destiny.

Rome could not lose by it. An edict of Theodosius II and of Valentinian III proclaimed the Roman bishop “rector of the whole Church.” Justinian published a similar decree. These edicts did not contain all that the popes pretended to see in them; but in those times of ignorance it was easy for them to secure that interpretation which was most favourable to themselves. The dominion of the

emperors in Italy becoming daily more precarious, the bishops of Rome took advantage of this circumstance to free themselves from their dependence.

But already had issued from the forests of the North the most effectual promoters of the papal power. The barbarians who had invaded and settled in the West, after being satiated with blood and plunder, lowered their reeking swords before the intellectual power that met them face to face. Recently converted to Christianity, ignorant of the spiritual character of the Church, and feeling the want of a certain external pomp in religion, they prostrated themselves, half savage and half heathen as they were, at the feet of the high priest of Rome. With their aid the West was in his power. At first the Vandals, then the Ostrogoths, somewhat later the Burgundians and Alans, next the Visigoths, and lastly the Lombards and Anglo-Saxons, came and bent the knee to the Roman pontiff. It was the sturdy shoulders of those children of the idolatrous north that succeeded in placing on the supreme throne of Christendom a pastor of the banks of the Tiber.

At the beginning of the seventh century these events were accomplishing in the West, precisely at the period when the power of Mahomet arose in the East, prepared to invade another quarter of the world.

From this time the evil continued to increase. In the eighth century we see the Roman bishops resisting on the one hand the Greek emperors, their lawful sovereigns, and endeavouring to expel them from Italy, while with the other they court the mayors of the palace in France, begging from this new power, just beginning to rise in the West, a share in the wreck of the empire. Rome founded her usurped authority between the East, which she repelled, and the West, which she summoned to her aid. She raised her throne between two revolts. Startled by the shouts of the Arabs, now become masters of Spain, and who boasted that they would speedily arrive in Italy by the gates of the Pyrenees and Alps, and proclaim the name of Mahomet on the Seven Hills; alarmed at the insolence of Astolphus, who at the head of his Lombards, roaring like a lion, and brandishing his sword before the gates of the eternal city, threatened to put every Roman to death: Rome, in the prospect of ruin, turned her frightened eyes around her, and threw herself into the arms of the Franks. The usurper Pepin demanded her pretended sanction of his new authority; it was granted, and the Papacy obtained in return his promise to be the defender of the "Republic of God." Pepin wrested from the Lombards the cities they had taken from the Greek emperor; yet, instead of restoring them to that prince, he laid their keys on St. Peter's altar, and swore with uplifted hands that he had not taken up arms for man, but to obtain from God the remission of his sins, and to do homage for his conquests to St. Peter. Thus did France establish the temporal power of the popes.

Charlemagne appeared; the first time he ascends the stairs to the basilica of St. Peter, devoutly kissing each step. A second time he presents himself, lord of all the nations that formed the empire of the West, and of Rome itself. Leo III thought fit to bestow the imperial title on him who already possessed the power; and on Christmas day, in the year 800, he placed the diadem of the Roman emperors on the brow of the son of Pepin. From this time the pope belongs to the empire of the Franks: his connection with the East is ended. He broke off from a decayed and falling tree to graft himself upon a wild and vigorous sapling. A future elevation, to which he would have never dared aspire, awaits him among these German tribes with whom he now unites himself.

Charlemagne bequeathed to his feeble successors only the wrecks of his power. In the ninth century disunion everywhere weakened the civil authority. Rome saw that this was the moment to exalt herself. When could the Church hope for a more favourable opportunity of becoming independent of the state, than when the crown which Charles had worn was broken, and its fragments lay scattered over his former empire?

Then appeared the False Decretals of Isidore. In this collection of the pretended decrees of the popes, the most ancient bishops, who were contemporary with Tacitus and Quintilian, were made to speak the barbarous Latin of the ninth century. The customs and constitutions of the Franks were seriously attributed to the Romans in the time of the emperors. Popes quoted the Bible in the Latin translation of Jerome, who had lived one, two or three centuries after them; and Victor, bishop of Rome, in the year 192, wrote to Theophilus, who was archbishop of Alexandria in 385. The impostor who had fabricated this collection endeavoured to prove that all bishops derived their authority from the bishop of Rome, who held his own immediately from Christ. He not only recorded all the successive conquests of the pontiffs, but even carried them back to the earliest times. The popes were not ashamed to avail themselves of this contemptible imposture. As early as 865, Nicholas I drew from its stores of weapons by which to combat princes and bishops. This impudent invention was for ages the arsenal of Rome.

Nevertheless, the vices and crimes of the pontiffs suspended for a time the effect of the decretals. The Papacy celebrated its admission to the table of kings by shameful orgies. She became intoxicated: her senses were lost in the midst of drunken revellings.

It is about this period that tradition places upon the papal throne a woman named Joan, who had taken refuge in Rome with her lover, and whose sex was betrayed by the pangs of childbirth during a solemn procession. But let us not

needlessly augment the shame of the pontifical court. Abandoned women at this time governed Rome; and that throne which pretended to rise above the majesty of kings was sunk deep in the dregs of vice. Theodora and Marozia installed and deposed at their pleasure the self-styled masters of the Church of Christ, and placed their lovers, sons, and grandsons in St. Peter's chair. These scandals, which are but too well authenticated, may perhaps have given rise to the tradition of Pope Joan.

Rome became one wild theatre of disorders, the possession of which was disputed by the most powerful families of Italy. The counts of Tuscany were generally victorious. In 1033, this house dared to place on the pontifical throne, under the name of Benedict IX, a youth brought up in debauchery. This boy of twelve years old continued, when pope, the same horrible and degrading vices. Another party chose Sylvester III in his stead; and Benedict, whose conscience was loaded with adulteries, and whose hands were stained with murder, at last sold the Papacy to a Roman ecclesiastic.

The emperors of Germany, filled with indignation at such enormities, purged Rome with the sword. The empire, asserting its paramount rights, drew the triple crown from the mire into which it had fallen, and saved the degraded papacy by giving it respectable men as its chiefs. Henry III deposed three popes in 1046, and his finger, decorated with the ring of the Roman patricians, pointed out the bishop to whom the keys of St. Peter should be confided. Four popes, all Germans, and nominated by the emperor, succeeded. When the Roman pontiff died, the deputies of that church repaired to the imperial court, like the envoys of other dioceses, to solicit a new bishop. With joy the emperor beheld the popes reforming abuses, strengthening the Church, holding councils, installing and deposing prelates, in defiance of foreign monarchs: the Papacy by these pretensions did but exalt the power of the emperor, its lord paramount. But to allow of such practices was to expose his own authority to great danger. The power which the popes thus gradually recovered might be turned suddenly against the emperor himself. When the reptile had gained strength, it might wound the bosom that had cherished it: and this result followed.

And now begins a new era for the papacy. It rises from its humiliation, and soon tramples the princes of the earth under foot. To exalt the Papacy is to exalt the Church, to advance religion, to ensure to the spirit the victory over the flesh, and to God the conquest of the world. Such are its maxims: in these ambition finds its advantage, and fanaticism its excuse.

The whole of this new policy is personified in one man: Hildebrand.

This pope, who has been by turns indiscreetly exalted or unjustly traduced, is the personification of the Roman pontificate in all its strength and glory. He is one of those normal characters in history, which include within themselves a new order of things, similar to those presented in other spheres by Charlemagne, Luther, and Napoleon.

This monk, the son of a carpenter of Savoy, was brought up in a Roman convent, and had quitted Rome at the period when Henry IIIhad there deposed three popes, and taken refuge in France in the austere convent of Cluny. In 1048, Bruno, bishop of Toul, having been nominated pope by the emperor at Worms, who was holding the German Diet in that city, assumed the pontifical habits, and took the name of Leo IX; but Hildebrand, who had hastened thither, refused to recognise him, since it was (said he) from the secular power that he held the tiara. Leo, yielding to the irresistible power of a strong mind and of a deep conviction, immediately humbled himself, laid aside his sacerdotal ornaments, and clad in the garb of a pilgrim, set out barefoot for Rome along with Hildebrand (says an historian), in order to be there legitimately elected by the clergy and the Roman people. From this time Hildebrand was the soul of the Papacy, until he became pope himself. He had governed the Church under the name of several pontiffs, before he reigned in person as Gregory VII. One grand idea had taken possession of this great genius. He desired to establish a visible theocracy, of which the pope, as vicar of Jesus Christ, should be the head. The recollection of the universal dominion of heathen Rome haunted his imagination and animated his zeal. He wished to restore to papal Rome all that imperial Rome had lost. "What Marius and Caesar," said his flatterers, "could not effect by torrents of blood, thou hast accomplished by a word."

Gregory VII was not directed by the spirit of the Lord. That spirit of truth, humility, and longsuffering was unknown to him. He sacrificed the truth whenever he judged it necessary to his policy. This he did particularly in the case of Berenger, archdeacon of Angers. But a spirit far superior to that of the generality of pontiffs—a deep conviction of the justice of his cause—undoubtedly animated him. He was bold, ambitious, persevering in his designs, and at the same time skillful and politic in the use of the means that would ensure success.

His first task was to organise the militia of the church. It was necessary to gain strength before attacking the empire. A council held at Rome removed the pastors from their families, and compelled them to become the devoted adherents of the hierarchy. The law of celibacy, planned and carried out by popes, who were themselves monks, changed the clergy into a sort of monastic order. Gregory VII claimed the same power over all the bishops and priests of Christendom, that an

abbot of Cluny exercises in the order over which he presides. The legates of Hildebrand, who compared themselves to the proconsuls of ancient Rome, travelled through the provinces, depriving the pastors of their legitimate wives; and, if necessary, the pope himself raised the populace against the married clergy.

But chief of all, Gregory designed emancipating Rome from its subjection to the empire. Never would he have dared conceive so bold a scheme, if the troubles that afflicted the minority of Henry IV, and the revolt of the German princes against that young emperor, had not favoured its execution. The pope was at this time one of the magnates of the empire. Making common cause with the other great vassals, he strengthened himself by the aristocratic interest, and then forbade all ecclesiastics, under pain of excommunication, to receive investiture from the emperor. He broke the ancient ties that connected the Churches and their pastors with the royal authority, but it was to bind them all to the pontifical throne. To this throne he undertook to chain priests, kings, and people, and to make the pope a universal monarch. It was Rome alone that every priest should fear: it was in Rome alone that he should hope. The kingdoms and principalities of the earth are her domain. All kings were to tremble at the thunderbolts hurled by the Jupiter of modern Rome. Woe to him who resists! Subjects are released from their oaths of allegiance; the whole country is placed under an interdict; public worship ceases; the churches are closed; the bells are mute; the sacraments are no longer administered; and the malediction extends even to the dead, to whom the earth, at the command of a haughty pontiff, denies the repose of the tomb.

The pope, subordinate from the very beginning of his existence successively to the Roman, Frank, and German emperors, was now free, and he trod for the first time as their equal, if not their master. Yet Gregory VII was humbled in his turn: Rome was taken, and Hildebrand compelled to flee. He died at Salerno, exclaiming, "I have loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore do I die in exile." Who shall dare charge with hypocrisy these words uttered on the very brink of the grave?

The successors of Gregory, like soldiers arriving after a victory, threw themselves as conquerors on the enslaved Churches. Spain rescued from Islamism, Prussia reclaimed from idolatry, fell into the arms of the crowned priest. The Crusades, which were undertaken at his instigation, extended and confirmed his authority. The pious pilgrims, who in imagination had seen saints and angels leading their armed bands,—who, entering humble and barefoot within the walls of Jerusalem, burnt the Jews in their synagogue, and watered with the blood of thousands of Saracens the places where they came to trace the sacred footsteps of the Prince of Peace,—carried

into the East the name of the pope, who had been forgotten there since he had exchanged the supremacy of the Greeks for that of the Franks.

In another quarter the power of the Church effected what the arms of the republic and of the empire had been unable to accomplish. The Germans laid at the feet of a bishop those tributes which their ancestors had refused to the most powerful generals. Their princes, on succeeding to the imperial dignity, imagined they received a crown from the popes, but it was a yoke that was placed upon their necks. The kingdoms of Christendom, already subject to the spiritual authority of Rome, now became her serfs and tributaries.

Thus everything was changed in the Church.

It was at first a community of brethren, and now an absolute monarchy was established in its bosom. All Christians were priests of the living God, with humble pastors as their guides. But a haughty head is upraised in the midst of these pastors; a mysterious voice utters words full of pride; an iron hand compels all men, great and small, rich and poor, bond and free, to wear the badge of its power. The holy and primitive equality of souls before God is lost sight of. At the voice of one man Christendom is divided into two unequal parties: on the one side is a separate caste of priests, daring to usurp the name of the Church, and claiming to be invested with peculiar privileges in the eyes of the Lord; and, on the other, servile flocks reduced to a blind and passive submission—a people gagged and fettered, and given over to a haughty caste. Every tribe, language, and nation of Christendom, submits to the dominion of this spiritual king, who has received power to conquer.

CHAPTER 2

Grace—Dead Faith—Works—Unity and Duality—Pelagianism—Salvation at the Hands of the Priests—Penance—Flagellations—Indulgences—Works of Supererogation—Purgatory—The Tariff—Jubilee—The Papacy and Christianity—State of Christendom

But side by side with the principle that should pervade the history of Christianity, was found another that should preside over its doctrine. This was the great idea of Christianity—the idea of grace, of pardon, of amnesty, of the gift of eternal life. This idea supposed in man an alienation from God, and an inability of returning by any power of his own communion with that infinitely holy being. The opposition between the true and the false doctrine undoubtedly cannot be entirely summed up in the question of salvation by faith or works. Nevertheless it is its most striking characteristic. But further, salvation considered as coming from man, is the creative principle of every error and abuse. The excesses produced by this fundamental error led to the Reformation, and by the profession of the contrary principle it was carried out. This feature should therefore be very prominent in an introduction to the history of that reform. Salvation by grace was the second characteristic which essentially distinguished the religion of God from all human systems. What had now become of it? Had the Church preserved, as a precious deposit, this great and primordial thought? Let us trace its history.

The inhabitants of Jerusalem, of Asia, of Greece, and of Rome, in the time of the first emperors, heard these glad tidings: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." At this proclamation of peace, at this joyful news, at this word of power, many guilty souls believed, and were drawn to Him who is the source of peace; and numerous Christian Churches were formed in the midst of the degenerate nations of that age.

But a great mistake was soon made as to the nature of this saving faith. Faith, according to St. Paul, is the means by which the whole being of the believer—his understanding, heart, and will—enter into possession of the salvation purchased for him by the incarnation and death of the Son of God. Jesus Christ is apprehended by faith and from that hour becomes all things to man and in man. He communicates a divine life to our human nature; and man thus renewed, and freed from the chains of sin and self, feels new affections and performs new works. Faith, says the theologian in order to express his ideas, is the subjective appropriation of the objective work of Christ. If faith be not an appropriation of salvation, it is nothing; all the Christian

economy is thrown into confusion, the fountains of the new life are sealed, and Christianity is overturned from its foundations.

And this is what did happen. This practical view of faith was gradually forgotten. Soon it became, what it still is to many persons, a simple act of the understanding, a mere submission to a superior authority.

From this first error there necessarily proceeded a second. Faith being thus stripped of its practical character, it was impossible to say that it alone had power to save: as works no longer were its fruits, they were of necessity placed side by side with it, and the doctrine that man is justified by faith and by works prevailed in the Church. In place of that Christian unity which comprises in a single principle justification and works, grace and the law, doctrine and duty, succeeded that melancholy duality which regards religion and morality as two entirely distinct things—that fatal error, which, by separating things that cannot live unless united, and by putting the soul on one side and the body on the other, is the cause of spiritual death. The words of the apostle, re-echoing across the interval of ages, are—"Having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"

Another great error contributed still further to unsettle the doctrine of grace: this was Pelagianism. Pelagius asserted that human nature is not fallen—that there is no hereditary corruption, and that man, having received the power to do good, has only to will in order to perform. If good works consist only in external acts, Pelagius is right. But if we look to the motives whence these outward acts proceed, we find everywhere in man's nature selfishness, forgetfulness of God, pollution, and impotency. The Pelagian doctrine, expelled by Augustine from the Church when it had presented itself boldly, insinuated itself as demiPelagianism, and under the mask of the Augustine forms of expression. This error spread with astonishing rapidity throughout Christendom. The danger of the doctrine was particularly manifested in this,—that by placing goodness without, and not within, the heart, it set a great value on external actions, legal observances, and penitential words. The more these practices were observed, the more righteous man became: by them heaven was gained; and soon the extravagant idea prevailed that there are men who have advanced in holiness beyond what was required of them.

While Pelagianism corrupted the Christian doctrine, it strengthened the hierarchy. The hand that lowered grace, exalted the Church: for grace is God, the Church is man.

The more we feel the truth that all men are guilty before God, the more also shall we cling to Christ as the only source of Grace.

How could we then place the Church in the same rank with Christ, since it is but an assembly of all those who are found in the same wretched state by nature? But so soon as we attribute to man a peculiar holiness, a personal merit, everything is changed. The clergy and the monks are looked upon as the most natural channels through which to receive the grace of God. This was what happened often after the times of Pelagius. Salvation, taken from the hands of God, fell into those of the priests, who set themselves in the place of our Lord. Souls thirsting for pardon were no more to look to heaven, but to the Church, and above all to its pretended head. To those blinded souls the Roman pontiff was God. Hence the greatness of the popes—hence unutterable abuses. The evil spread still further. When Pelagianism laid down the doctrine that man could attain a state of perfect sanctification, it affirmed also that the merits of saints and martyrs might be applied to the Church. A peculiar power was attributed to their intercession. Prayers were made to them; their aid was invoked in all the sorrows of life; and a read idolatry thus supplanted the adoration of the living and true God.

At the same time, Pelagianism multiplied rites and ceremonies. Man, imagining that he could and that he ought by good works to render himself deserving of grace, saw no fitter means of meriting it than acts of external worship. The ceremonial law became infinitely complicated, and was soon put on a level, to say the least, with the moral law. Thus were the consciences of Christians burdened anew with a yoke that had been declared insupportable in the times of the apostles.

But it was especially by the system of penance, which flowed immediately from Pelagianism, that Christianity was perverted. At first, penance had consisted in certain public expressions of repentance, required by the Church from those who had been excluded on account of scandals, and who desired to be received again into its bosom.

By degrees penance was extended to every sin, even to the most secret, and was considered as a sort of punishment to which it was necessary to submit, in order to obtain the forgiveness of God through the priest's absolution.

Ecclesiastical penance was thus confounded with Christian repentance, without which there can be neither justification nor sanctification.

Instead of looking to Christ for pardon through faith alone, it was sought for principally in the Church through penitential works.

Great importance was soon attached to external marks of repentance—to tears, fasting, and mortification of the flesh; and the inward regeneration of the heart, which alone constitutes a real conversion, was forgotten.

As confession and penance are easier than the extirpation of sin and the abandonment of vice, many ceased contending against the lusts of the flesh, and preferred gratifying them at the expense of a few mortifications.

The penitential works, thus substituted for the salvation of God, were multiplied in the Church from Tertullian down to the thirteenth century. Men were required to fast, to go barefoot, to wear no linen, &c.; to quit their homes and their native land for distant countries; or to renounce the world and embrace a monastic life.

In the eleventh century voluntary flagellations were superadded to these practices: somewhat later they became quite a mania in Italy, which was then in a very disturbed state. Nobles and peasants, old and young, even children of five years of age, whose only covering was a cloth tied round the middle, went in pairs, by hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands, through the towns and villages, visiting the churches in the depth of winter. Armed with scourges, they flogged each other without pity, and the streets resounded with cries and groans that drew tears from all who heard them.

Still, long before the disease had reached such a height, the priest-ridden world had sighed for deliverance. The priests themselves had found out, that if they did not apply a remedy their usurped power would slip from their hands. They accordingly invented that system of barter celebrated under the title of Indulgences. They said to their penitents: "You cannot accomplish the tasks imposed on you. Well! we, the priests of God and your pastors, will take this heavy burden upon ourselves. For a seven weeks' fast," said Regino, abbot of Prum, "you shall pay twenty pence, if you are rich; ten, if less wealthy; and three pence if you are poor; and so on for other matters." Courageous men raised their voices against this traffic, but in vain! The pope soon discovered what advantages could be derived from those indulgences. Alexander Hales, the irrefragable doctor, invented in the thirteenth century a doctrine well calculated to secure these vast revenues to the Papacy. A bull of Clement VII declared it an article of faith. Jesus Christ, it was said, had done much more than was necessary to reconcile God to man. One single drop of his blood would have been sufficient. But he shed it copiously, in order to form a treasure for his

Church that eternity can never exhaust. The supererogatory merits of the saints, the reward of the good works they had done beyond their obligation, have still further augmented this treasure. Its keeping and management were confided to Christ's vicar upon earth. He applies to each sinner, for the sins committed after baptism, these merits of Jesus Christ and of the saints, according to the measure and the quantity his sins require. Who would venture to attack a custom of such holy origin!

This inconceivable traffic was soon extended and complicated. The philosophers of Alexandria had spoken of a fire in which men were to be purified. Many ancient doctors had adopted this notion; and Rome declared this philosophical opinion a tenet of the Church. The pope by a bull annexed Purgatory to his domain. In that place, he declared, men would have to expiate the sins that could not be expiated here on earth; but that indulgences would liberate their souls from that intermediate state in which their sins would detain them. Thomas Aquinas set forth this doctrine in his famous Summa Theologiae. No means were spared to fill the mind with terror. The priests depicted in horrible colours the torments inflicted by this purifying fire on all who became its prey. In many Roman Catholic countries we may still see paintings exhibited in the churches and public places, wherein poor souls, from the midst of glowing flames, invoke with anguish some alleviation of their pain. Who could refuse the ransom which, falling into the treasury of Rome, would redeem the soul from such torments?

Somewhat later, in order to reduce this traffic to a system, they invented (probably under John XXII) the celebrated and scandalous Tariff of Indulgences, which has gone through more than forty editions. The least delicate ears would be offended by an enumeration of all the horrors it contains. Incest, if not detected, was to cost five groats; and six, if it was known. There was a stated price for murder, infanticide, adultery, perjury, burglary, &c. "O disgrace of Rome!" exclaims Claude d'Espence, a Roman divine: and we may add, O disgrace of human nature! for we can utter no reproach against Rome that does not recoil on man himself. Rome is human nature exalted in some of its worst propensities. We say this that we may speak the truth; we say it also, that we may be just.

Boniface VIII, the most daring and ambitious pontiff after Gregory VII, was enabled to effect still more than his predecessors.

In the year 1300, he published a bull, in which he declared to the Church that every hundred years all who made a pilgrimage to Rome should receive a plenary indulgence. From all parts, from Italy, Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, France, Spain, Germany, and Hungary, people flocked in crowds. Old men of sixty and seventy

undertook the journey, and in one month two hundred thousand pilgrims visited Rome. All these strangers brought rich offerings; and the pope and the Romans saw their coffers replenished.

Roman avarice soon fixed each Jubilee at fifty, then at thirtythree, and lastly at twentyfive years' interval. Then, for the greater convenience of purchasers, and the greater profit of the sellers, both the jubilee and its indulgences were transported from Rome to every marketplace in Christendom. It was no longer necessary to leave one's home. What others had gone in search of beyond the Alps, each man could now buy at his own door.

The evil could not become greater.

Then the Reformer appeared.

We have seen what had become of the principle that was destined to govern the history of Christianity; we have seen also what became of that which should have pervaded its doctrines: both were lost.

To set up a mediatorial caste between God and man—to obtain by works, by penance, and by money the salvation which is the free gift of God—such is Popery.

To open to all, through Jesus Christ, without any human mediator, without that power which calls itself the Church, free access to the great boon of eternal life which God offers to man—such is Christianity and the Reformation.

Popery is a lofty barrier erected by the labour of ages between God and man. If anyone desires to scale it, he must pay or he must suffer; and even then he will not surmount it.

The Reformation is the power that has overthrown this barrier, that has restored Christ to man, and has thus opened a level path by which he may reach his Creator.

Popery interposes the Church between God and man. Primitive Christianity and the Reformation bring God and man face to face.

Popery separates them—the Gospel unites them. After having thus traced the history of the decline and fall of the two great principles that were to distinguish the religion of "God from all human systems, let us see what were some of the consequences of this immense transformation.

But first let us pay due honour to the Church of the Middle Ages, which succeeded that of the apostles and of the fathers, and which preceded that of the reformers. The Church was still the Church, although fallen, and daily more and more enslaved: that is to say, she was always the greatest friend of man. Her hands, though bound, could still be raised to bless. Eminent servants of Jesus Christ, who were true Protestants as regards the essential doctrines of Christianity, diffused a cheering light during the dark ages; and in the humblest convent, in the remotest parish, might be found poor monks and poor priests to alleviate great sufferings. The Catholic church was not the Papacy. The latter was the oppressor, the former the oppressed. The Reformation, which declared war against the one, came to deliver the other. And it must be confessed that the Papacy itself became at times in the hands of God, who brings good out of evil, a necessary counterpoise to the power and ambition of princes.

CHAPTER 3

Religion—Relics—Easter Revels—Morals—Corruption—Disorders of the Priests, Bishops, and Popes—A Papal Family—Alexander VI—Caesar Borgia—Education—Ignorance—Ciceronians

Let us now see what was the state of the Church previous to the Reformation.

The nations of Christendom no longer looked to a holy and living God for the free gift of eternal life. To obtain it, they were obliged to have recourse to all the means that a superstitious, fearful, and alarmed imagination could devise. Heaven was filled with saints and mediators, whose duty it was to solicit this mercy. Earth was filled with pious works, sacrifices, observances, and ceremonies, by which it was to be obtained. Here is a picture of the religion of this period transmitted to us by one who was long a monk, and afterwards a fellow labourer of Luther's—by Myconius:—

"The sufferings and merits of Christ were looked upon as an idle tale, or as the fictions of Homer. There was no thought of faith by which we become partakers of the Saviour's righteousness and of the heritage of eternal life. Christ was looked upon as a severe judge, prepared to condemn all who should not have recourse to the intercession of the saints, or to the papal indulgences. Other intercessors appeared in his place:—first the Virgin Mary, like the Diana of paganism, and then the saints,

whose numbers were continually augmented by the popes. These mediators granted their intercession only to such applicants as had deserved well of the orders founded by them. For this it was necessary to do, not what God had commanded in his Word, but to perform a number of works invented by monks and priests, and which brought money to the treasury. These works were AveMarias, the prayers of Saint Ursula and of Saint Bridget: they must chant and cry night and day. There were as many resorts for pilgrims as there were mountains, forests, and valleys.

But these penances might be compounded for with money. The people, therefore, brought to the convents and to the priests money and every thing that had any value—fowls, ducks, geese, eggs, wax, straw, butter, and cheese. Then the hymns resounded, the bells rang, incense filled the sanctuary, sacrifices were offered up, the larders overflowed, the glasses went round, and masses terminated and concealed these pious orgies. The bishops no longer preached, but they consecrated priests, bells, monks, churches, chapels, images, books, and cemeteries; and all this brought in a large revenue. Bones, arms, and feet were preserved in gold and silver boxes; they were given out during mass for the faithful to kiss, and this too was a source of great profit.

"All these people maintained that the pope, 'sitting as God in the temple of God,' could not err, and they would not suffer any contradiction."

In the church of All Saints at Wittenberg was shown a fragment of Noah's ark, some soot from the furnace of the Three Children, a Piece of wood from the cradle of Jesus Christ, some hair from the beard of St. Christopher, and nineteen thousand other relics of greater or less value. At Schaffhausen was exhibited the breath of St. Joseph that Nicodemus had received in his glove. In Wurtemberg you might meet a seller of indulgences, vending his merchandise, his head adorned with a large feather plucked from the wing of St. Michael. But it was not necessary to travel far in search of these precious treasures. Men who farmed the relics traversed the whole country, hawking them about the rural districts (as has since been the case with the Holy Scriptures), and carrying them to the houses of the faithful, to spare them the trouble and expense of a pilgrimage. They were exhibited with pomp in the churches. These wandering hawkers paid a stipulated sum to the owners of the relics,—a percentage on their profits. The kingdom of heaven had disappeared, and in its place a market of abominations had been opened upon earth.

Thus a spirit of profanity had invaded religion; and the holiest recollections of the Church, the seasons which more particularly summoned the faithful to holy

meditation and love, were disgraced by buffoonery and heathenish profanation. The "Revels of Easter" held a distinguished place in the records of the Church. As the festival of the resurrection of Christ ought to be celebrated with joy, the preachers studied in their sermons everything that might raise a laugh among their hearers. One imitated the note of the cuckoo; another hissed like a goose. One dragged to the altar a layman robed in a monk's frock; a second related the most indecent stories; and a third recounted the tricks of St. Peter, and among others, how in a tavern he had cheated his host by not paying his reckoning. The lower clergy took advantage of this opportunity to ridicule their superiors. The churches were converted into a mere stage for mountebanks, and the priests into buffoons.

If such was the state of religion, what must have been the state of morals?

Undoubtedly the corruption was not at that time universal. Justice requires that this should not be forgotten. The Reformation elicited numerous examples of piety, righteousness, and strength of mind. The spontaneous action of God's power was the cause; but how can we deny that he had beforehand deposited the seeds of this new life in the bosom of the Church? If in our days we should bring together all the immoralities, all the turpitudes committed in a single country, the mass of corruption would doubtless shock us still. Nevertheless, the evil at this period wore a character and universality that it has not borne subsequently. And, above all, the mystery of iniquity desolated the holy places, as it has not been permitted to do since the days of the Reformation.

Morality had declined with the decline of faith. The tidings of the gift of eternal life is the power of God to regenerate man. Take away the salvation which God has given, and you take away sanctification and good works. And this result followed.

The doctrine and the sale of indulgences were powerful incentives to evil among an ignorant people. True, according to the Church, indulgences could benefit those only who promised to amend their lives, and who kept their word. But what could be expected from a tenet invented solely with a view to the profit that might be derived from it? The venders of indulgences were naturally tempted, for the better sale of their merchandise, to present their wares to the people in the most attractive and seducing aspect. The learned themselves did not fully understand the doctrine. All that the multitude saw in them was, that they permitted men to sin; and the merchants were not over eager to dissipate an error so favourable to their sale.

What disorders and crimes were committed in these dark ages, when impunity was to be purchased by money! What had man to fear, when a small contribution

towards building a church secured him from the fear of punishment in the world to come? What hope could there be of revival when all communication between God and man was cut off, and man, an alien from God, who is the spirit and the life, moved only in a round of paltry ceremonies and sensual observances, in an atmosphere of death!

The priests were the first who yielded to this corrupting influence. By desiring to exalt themselves they became abased. They had aimed at robbing God of a ray of his glory, and placing it in their own bosoms; but their attempt had proved vain, and they had only hidden there a leaven of corruption stolen from the power of evil. The history of the age swarms with scandals. In many places, the people were delighted at seeing a priest keep a mistress, that the married women might be safe from his seductions. What humiliating scenes did the house of a pastor in those days present! The wretched man supported the woman and the children she had borne him with the tithes and offerings. His conscience was troubled: he blushed in the presence of the people, before his domestics, and before God. The mother, fearing to come to want if the priest should die, made provision against it beforehand, and robbed her own house. Her honour was lost. Her children were ever a living accusation against her. Despised by all, they plunged into quarrels and debauchery. Such was the family of the priest! These were frightful scenes, by which the people knew how to profit.

The rural districts were the scene of numerous disorders. The abodes of the clergy were often dens of corruption. Corneille Adrian at Bruges, the abbot Trinkler at Cappel, imitated the manners of the East, and had their harems. Priests, consorting with dissolute characters, frequented the taverns, played at dice, and crowned their orgies with quarrels and blasphemy.

The council of Schaffhausen forbade the priests to dance in public, except at marriages, and to carry more than one kind of arms: they decreed also that all who were found in houses of ill fame should be unfrocked. In the archbishopric of Mentz, they scaled the walls by night, and created all kinds of disorder and confusion in the inns and taverns, and broke the doors and locks. In many places the priest paid the bishop a regular tax for the woman with whom he lived, and for each child he had by her. A German bishop said publicly one day, at a great entertainment, that in one year eleven thousand priests had presented themselves before him for that purpose. It is Erasmus who relates this.

If we go higher in the hierarchial order, we find the corruption not less great. The dignitaries of the Church preferred the tumult of camps to the hymns of the altar. To be able, lance in hand, to reduce his neighbours to obedience was one of the chief

qualifications of a bishop. Baldwin, archbishop of Treves, was continually at war with his neighbours and his vassals: he demolished their castles, built strongholds, and thought of nothing but the extension of his territory.

A certain bishop of Eichstadt, when administering justice, wore a coat of mail under his robes, and held a large sword in his hand. He used to say he was not afraid of five Bavarians, provided they did but attack him in fair fight. Everywhere the bishops were continually at war with their towns. The citizens demanded liberty, the bishops required implicit obedience. If the latter gained the victory, they punished the revolters by sacrificing numerous victims to their vengeance; but the flame of insurrection burst out again, at the very moment when it was thought to be extinguished.

And what a spectacle was presented by the pontifical throne in the times immediately preceding the Reformation! Rome, it must be acknowledged, had seldom witnessed so much infamy. Rodrigo Borgia, after having lived with a Roman lady, had continued the same illicit connection with one of her daughters, named Rosa Vanozza, by whom he had five children. He was a cardinal and archbishop, living at Rome with Vanozza and other women, visiting the churches and the hospitals, when the death of Innocent VIII created a vacancy in the pontifical chair. He succeeded in obtaining it by bribing each cardinal at a stipulated price. Four mules laden with silver publicly entered the palace of Sforza, one of the most influential of the cardinals. Borgia became pope under the name of Alexander VI, and rejoiced in thus attaining the summit of earthly felicity.

On the day of his coronation, his son Caesar, a youth of ferocious and dissolute manners, was created archbishop of Valencia and bishop of Pampeluna. He next celebrated in the Vatican the marriage of his daughter Lucretia, by festivities at which his mistress, Julia Bella, was present, and which were enlivened by licentious plays and songs. “All the clergy,” says an historian, “kept mistresses, and all the convents of the capital were houses of ill fame.” Caesar Borgia espoused the cause of the Guelfs; and when by their assistance he had destroyed the Ghibellines, he turned upon the Guelfs and crushed them in their turn. But he desired to share alone in all these spoils. In 1497, Alexander gave the duchy of Benevento to his eldest son. The duke suddenly disappeared. A faggot dealer, on the banks of the Tiber, one George Schiavoni, had seen a dead body thrown into the stream during the night; but he said nothing of it, as being a common occurrence. The body of the duke was found. His brother Caesar had been the instigator of his death. this was not enough. His brother-in-law stood in his way: one day Caesar caused him to be stabbed on the very stairs of the pontifical palace. He was carried bleeding to his own apartments. His wife and

sister did not leave him; and fearful that Caesar would employ poison, they prepared his meals with their own hands. Alexander set a guard on the doors; but Caesar ridiculed these precautions, and remarked, as the pope was about to pay a visit to his son-in-law, "What is not done at dinner will be done at supper." Accordingly, one day he gained admittance to the chamber of the convalescent, turned out the wife and sister, and calling in his executioner Michilotto, the only man in whom he placed any confidence, ordered his brother-in-law to be strangled before his eyes. Alexander had a favourite, Perotto, whose influence also offended the young duke. He rushed upon him: Perotto took refuge under the pontifical mantle, and clasped the pope in his arms. Caesar stabbed him, and the blood of his victim spirted in the face of the pontiff. "The pope," adds a contemporary and eyewitness of these scenes, "loves the duke his son, and lives in great fear of him."

Caesar was the handsomest and strongest man of his age. Six wild bulls fell easily beneath his blows in single combat. Every morning some new victim was found, who had been assassinated during the night in the Roman streets. Poison carried off those whom the dagger could not reach. No one dared move or breathe in Rome, for fear that his turn should come next. Caesar Borgia was the hero of crime. That spot of earth in which iniquity had attained such a height was the throne of the pontiffs. When man gives himself up to the powers of evil, the higher he claims to be exalted before God, the lower he sinks into the abyss of hell. The dissolute entertainments given by the pope, his son Caesar, and his daughter Lucretia, in the pontifical palace, cannot be described or even thought of without shuddering. The impure groves of antiquity saw nothing like them. Historians have accused Alexander and Lucretia of incest; but this charge does not appear sufficiently established. The pope had prepared poison in a box of sweetmeats that was to be served up after a sumptuous repast: the cardinal for whom it was intended being forewarned, gained over the attendant, and the poisoned box was set before Alexander. He ate of it and died. "The whole city ran together, and could not satiate their eyes with gazing on this dead viper."

Such was the man who filled the papal chair at the beginning of the century in which the Reformation burst forth.

Thus had the clergy brought not only themselves but religion into disrepute. Well might a powerful voice exclaim: "The ecclesiastical order is opposed to God and to his glory. The people know it well; and this is but too plainly shown by the many songs, proverbs, and jokes against the priests, that are current among the commonalty, and all those caricatures of monks and priests on every wall, and even on the playingcards.

Everyone feels a loathing on seeing or hearing a priest in the distance." It is Luther who speaks thus.

The evil had spread through all ranks: "a strong delusion" had been sent among men; the corruption of manners corresponded with the corruption of faith. A mystery of iniquity oppressed the enslaved Church of Christ.

Another consequence necessarily flowed from the neglect into which the fundamental doctrine of the gospel had fallen. Ignorance of the understanding accompanied the corruption of the heart. The priests having taken into their hands the distribution of the salvation that belongs only to God, had secured a sufficient title to the respect of the people. What need had they to study sacred learning? It was no longer a question of explaining the Scriptures, but of granting letters of indulgence; and for this ministry it was not necessary to have acquired much learning.

In country places, they chose for preachers, says Wimpheling, "miserable wretches whom they had previously raised from beggary, and who had been cooks, musicians, huntsmen, stableboys, and even worse."

The superior clergy themselves were often sunk in great ignorance. A bishop of Dunfeld congratulated himself on having never learnt either Greek or Hebrew. The monks asserted that all heresies arose from those two languages, and particularly from the Greek. "The New Testament," said one of them, "is a book full of serpents and thorns. Greek," continued he, "is a new and recently invented language, and we must be upon our guard against it. As for Hebrew, my dear brethren, it is certain that all who learn it, immediately become Jews." Heresbach, a friend of Erasmus, and a respectable author, reports these expressions. Thomas Linacer, a learned and celebrated ecclesiastic, had never read the New Testament. In his latter days (in 1524), he called for a copy, but quickly threw it away from him with an oath, because on opening it his eyes had glanced upon these words: "But I say unto you, Swear not at all." Now he was a great swearer. "Either this is not the Gospel," said he, "or else we are not Christians." Even the faculty of theology at Paris scrupled not to declare to the parliament: "Religion is ruined, if you permit the study of Greek and Hebrew."

If any learning was found here and there among the clergy, it was not in sacred literature. The Ciceronians of Italy affected a great contempt for the Bible on account of its style. Pretended priests of the Church of Christ translated the writings of holy men, inspired by the Spirit of God, in the style of Virgil and of Horace, to accommodate their language to the ears of good society. Cardinal Bembo, instead of the Holy Ghost, used to write the breath of the heavenly zephyr; for the expression to

forgive sins—to bend the manes and the sovereign gods; and for Christ, the Son of God— Minerva sprung from the head of Jupiter. Finding one day the worthy Sadolet engaged in translating the Epistle to the Romans, he said to him: "Leave these childish matters: such fooleries do not become a sensible man."

These were some of the consequences of the system that then oppressed Christendom. This picture undoubtedly demonstrates the corruption of the Church, and the necessity for a reformation. Such was our design in writing this sketch. The vital doctrines of Christianity had almost entirely disappeared, and with them the life and light that constitute the essence of the religion of God. The material strength of the Church was gone. It lay an exhausted, enfeebled, and almost lifeless body, extended over that part of the world which the Roman empire had occupied.

CHAPTER 4

Imperishable Nature of Christianity—Two Laws of God—Apparent Strength of Rome—Secret Opposition—Decline—Threefold Opposition—Kings and People—Transformation of the Church—The Pope judged in Italy—Discoveries of Kings and their Subjects—Frederick the Wise—Moderation and Expectation

The evils which thus afflicted Christendom; superstition, unbelief, ignorance, vain speculation, and corruption of morals—the natural fruits of the hearts of man—were not new upon the earth. Often they had appeared in the history of nations. They had invaded, especially in the East, the different religious systems that had seen their day of glory. Those enervated systems had sunk under these evils, had fallen under their attack, and not one of them had ever risen again.

Was Christianity now to undergo the same fate? Would it be lost like these old national religions? Would the blow that had caused their death be sufficient to deprive it of life? Could nothing save it? Will these hostile powers that overwhelm it, and which have already overthrown so many various systems of worship, be able to seat themselves without resistance on the ruins of the Church of Jesus Christ?

No! There is in Christianity what none of these national systems possessed. It does not, like them, present certain general ideas mingled with tradition and fable, destined to fall sooner or later under the assault of reason: it contains a pure and undefiled truth, founded on facts capable of bearing the examination of every upright and enlightened mind. Christianity does not propose merely to excite in man certain vague religious feelings, whose charm once lost can never be recovered: its object is to satisfy, and it does really satisfy, all the religious wants of human nature, whatever may be the degree of development which it has attained. It is not the work of man, whose labours pass away and are forgotten; it is the work of God, who upholds what he has created; and it has the promise of its Divine Head as the pledge of its duration.

It is impossible for human nature ever to rise superior to Christianity. And if for a time man thought he could do without it, it soon appeared to him with fresh youth and a new life, as the only remedy for souls. The degenerate nations then returned with new ardour toward those ancient, simple, and powerful truths, which in the hour of their infatuation they had despised.

In fact, Christianity manifested in the sixteenth century the same regenerative power that it had exercised at first. After fifteen centuries the same truths produced the same effects. In the day of the Reformation, as in the time of Peter and Paul, the

Gospel overthrew mighty obstacles with irresistible force. Its sovereign power displayed its efficacy from north to south among nations the most dissimilar in manners, character, and intellectual development. Then as in the times of Stephen and James, it kindled the fire of enthusiasm and devotedness in the lifeless nations, and elevated them to the height of martyrdom.

How was this revival of the church accomplished? We observe here two laws by which God governs the Church in all times.

First he prepares slowly and from afar that which he designs to accomplish. He has ages in which to work. Then, when the time is come, he effects the greatest results by the smallest means. It is thus he acts in nature and in history. When he wishes to produce a majestic tree, he deposits a small seed in the bosom of the earth; when he wishes to renovate his Church, he employs the lowliest instruments to accomplish what emperors and learned and distinguished men in the Church could not effect. We shall soon go in search of, and we shall discover, that small seed which a Divine hand placed in the earth in the days of the Reformation. But we must here distinguish and recognise the different means by which God prepared the way for this great revolution.

At the period when the reformation was about to burst forth, Rome appeared in peace and security. One might have said that nothing could ever disturb her in her triumph: great victories had been achieved by her. The general councils—those upper and lower chambers of Catholicism—had been subdued. The Waldenses and the Hussites had been crushed. No university, except perhaps that of Paris, which sometimes raised its voice at the signal of its kings, doubted the infallibility of the oracles of Rome. Everyone seemed to have taken his own share of its power. The higher orders of the clergy preferred giving to a distant chief the tithe of their revenues, and tranquilly to consume the remainder, to risking all for an independence that would cost them dear and would bring them little profit. The inferior clergy, attracted by the prospect of brilliant stations, which their ambition painted and discovered in the distance, willingly purchased by a little slavery the faltering hopes they cherished. Besides, they were everywhere so oppressed by the chiefs of the hierarchy, that they could scarcely stir under their powerful hands, and much less raise themselves and make head against them. The people bent the knee before the Roman altar; and even kings themselves, who began in secret to despise the bishop of Rome, would not have dared lay hands upon his power for fear of the imputation of sacrilege.

But if external position appeared to have subsided, or even to have entirely ceased, when the Reformation broke out, its internal strength had increased. If we

take a nearer view of the edifice, we discover more than one symptom that foreboded its destruction. The cessation of the general councils had scattered their principles throughout the Church, and carried disunion into the camp of their opponents. The defenders of the hierarchy were divided into two parties: those who maintained the system of absolute papal dominion, according to the maxims of Hildebrand; and those who desired a constitutional papal government, offering securities and liberty to the several Churches.

And more than this, in both parties faith in the infallibility of the Roman bishop had been rudely shaken. If no voice was raised to attack it, it was because everyone felt anxious rather to preserve the little faith he still possessed. They dreaded the slightest shock, lest it should overthrow the whole edifice. Christendom held its breath; but it was to prevent a calamity in which it feared to perish. From the moment that man trembles to abandon a long-worshipped persuasion, he possesses it no more. And he will not much longer keep up the appearance that he wishes to maintain.

The Reformation had been gradually prepared by God's providence in three different spheres—the political, the ecclesiastical, and the literary. Princes and their subjects, Christians and divines, the learned and the wise, contributed to bring about this revolution of the sixteenth century. Let us pass in review this triple classification, finishing with that of literature, which was perhaps the most powerful in the times immediately preceding the reform.

And, firstly, Rome had lost much of her ancient credit in the eyes of nations and of kings. Of this the Church itself was the primary cause. The errors and superstitions which she had introduced into Christianity were not, properly speaking, what had inflicted the mortal wound. The Christian world must have been raised above the clergy in intellectual and religious development, to have been able to judge of it in this point of view. But there was an order of things within the comprehension of the laity, and by this the Church was judged. It had become altogether earthly. That sacerdotal dominion which lorded over the nations, and which could not exist except by the delusion of its subjects, and by the halo that encircled it, had forgotten its nature, left heaven and its spheres of light and glory to mingle in the vulgar interests of citizens and princes. The priests, born to be the representatives of the Spirit, had bartered it away for the flesh. They had abandoned the treasures of science and the spiritual power of the Word, for the brute force and false glory of the age.

This happened naturally enough. It was in truth the spiritual order which the Church had at first undertaken to defend. But to protect it against the resistance and attacks of the people, she had recourse to earthly means, to vulgar arms, which a

false policy had induced her to take up. When once the Church had begun to handle such weapons, her spirituality was at an end. Her arm could not become temporal and her heart not become temporal also. Erelong was seen apparently the reverse of what had been at first. After resolving to employ earth to defend heaven, she made use of heaven to defend the earth. Theocratic forms became in her hands the means of accomplishing worldly enterprises. The offerings which the people laid at the feet of the sovereign pontiff of Christendom were employed in maintaining the splendour of his court and in paying his armies. His spiritual power served as steps by which to place the kings and nations of the earth under his feet. The charm ceased, and the power of the Church was lost, so soon as the men of those days could say, She is become as one of us.

The great were the first to scrutinise the titles of this imaginary power. This very examination might perhaps have been sufficient for the overthrow of Rome. But fortunately for her the education of the princes was everywhere in the hands of her adepts, who inspired their august pupils with sentiments of veneration towards the Roman pontiff. The rulers of the people grew up in the sanctuary of the Church. Princes of ordinary capacity never entirely got beyond it: many longed only to return to it at the hour of death. They preferred dying in a friar's cowl to dying beneath a crown.

Italy—that European apple of discord—contributed perhaps more than anything else to open the eyes of kings. They had to contract alliances with the pope, which had reference to the temporal prince of the States of the Church, and not to the bishop of bishops. Kings were astonished at seeing the popes ready to sacrifice the rights belonging to the pontiff, in order that they might preserve some advantage to the prince. They perceived that these pretended organs of the truth had recourse to all the paltry wiles of policy,— to deceit, dissimulation, and perjury. Then fell off the bandage which education had bound over the eyes of princes. Then the artful Ferdinand of Aragon played stratagem against stratagem. Then the impetuous Louis XII had a medal struck, with the inscription, Perdam Babylonis Nomen. And the good Maximilian of Austria, grieved at hearing of the treachery of Leo X, said openly: "This pope also, in my opinion, is a scoundrel. Now may I say, that never in my life has any pope kept his faith or his word with me I hope, God willing, this will be the last of them."

Kings and people then began to feel impatient under the heavy burden the popes had laid upon them. They demanded that Rome should relieve them from tithes, tributes, and annates, which exhausted their resources. Already had France opposed Rome with the Pragmatic Sanction, and the chiefs of the empire claimed the like

immunity. the emperor was present in person at the council of Pisa in 1411, and even for a time entertained the idea of securing the Papacy to himself. But of all these leaders, none was so useful to the Reformation as he in whose states it was destined to commence.

Frederick of Saxony, surnamed the Wise, was at that time the most powerful of all the Electors. Coming to the government of the hereditary states of his family in 1487, he had received the electoral dignity from the emperor; and in 1493, having gone on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he was there made a knight of the Holy Sepulchre. the influence he exercised, his wealth and liberality, raised him above his equals. God chose him to serve as a tree under whose shelter the seeds of truth might put forth their first shoots, without being uprooted by the tempests around them.

No one was better adapted for this noble ministry. Frederick possessed the esteem of all, and enjoyed the full confidence of the emperor. He even supplied his place when Maximilian was absent from Germany. His wisdom did not consist in the skillful exercise of a crafty policy, but in an enlightened, farseeing prudence; the first principle of which was never from interested motives to infringe the laws of honour and of religion.

At the same time, he felt the power of God's word in his heart. One day, when the vicar-general Staupitz was with him, the conversation turned on those who were in the habit of delivering empty declamations from the pulpit. "All discourses," said the elector, "that are filled only with subtleties and human traditions, are wonderfully cold and unimpressive; since no subtlety can be advanced, that another subtlety cannot overthrow. The Holy Scriptures alone are clothed with such power and majesty, that, destroying all our learned reasoning machines, they press us close, and compel us to say, Never man spake like this man." Staupitz having expressed himself entirely of that opinion, the elector shook him cordially by the hand and said: "Promise me that you will always think the same."

Frederick was precisely the prince required at the beginning of the Reformation. Too much weakness on the part of the friends of this work would have allowed of its being crushed. Too much precipitation would have made the storm burst forth sooner, which from its very commencement began to gather in secret against it. Frederick was moderate but firm. He possessed that virtue which God requires at all times in those who love his ways: he waited for God. He put in practice the wise counsel of Gamaliel: "If this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it." "Things are come to such a pass," said this prince to Spengler of Nuremberg, one of the most enlightened men of his day, "that man can do no more;

God alone must act. For this reason we place in his powerful hands these mighty works that are too difficult for us." Providence claims our admiration in the choice it made of such a ruler to protect its rising work.

CHAPTER 5

Popular Feeling—The Empire—Providential Preparations—Impulse of the Reformation—Peace—The Commonalty—National Character—Papal Yoke—State of the Empire—Opposition at Rome—Middle Classes—Switzerland—Courage—Liberty—Smaller Cantons—Italy—Obstacles to the Reform—Spain—Obstacles—Portugal—France—Preparations—Disappointment—The Low Countries—England—Scotland—The North—Russia—Poland—Bohemia—Hungary

We have seen God's preparations among the princes for the work he was about to accomplish: let us now consider what they were among their subject. It would have been of less importance for the chiefs to have been ready, if the nations themselves had not been so. The discoveries made by the kings had acted gradually upon the people. The wisest of them began to grow accustomed to the idea that the bishop of Rome was a mere man, and sometimes even a very bad man. The people in general began to suspect that he was not much holier than their own bishops, whose reputation was very equivocal. The licentiousness of the popes excited the indignation of Christendom, and a hatred of the Roman name was deeply seated in the hearts of nations.

Numerous causes at the same time facilitated the emancipation of the various countries of the West. Let us cast a glance over their condition at this period.

The Empire was a confederation of different states, having an emperor at their head, and each possessing sovereignty within its own territories. The Imperial Diet, composed of all the princes or sovereign states, exercised the legislative power for all the Germanic body. It was the emperor's duty to ratify the laws, decrees, and recesses of this assembly, and he had the charge of applying them and putting them into execution. The seven most powerful princes, under the title of Electors, had the privilege of conferring the imperial crown.

The north of Germany, inhabited principally by the ancient Saxon race, had acquired the greatest portion of liberty. The emperor, whose hereditary possessions were continually harassed by the Turks, was compelled to keep on good terms with these princes and their courageous subjects, who were at that time necessary to him. Several free cities in the north, west, and south of the empire, had by their commerce, manufactures, and industry, attained a high degree of prosperity, and consequently of independence. The powerful house of Austria, which wore the imperial crown, held most of the states of southern Germany in its power, and narrowly watched every movement. It was preparing to extend its dominion over the whole of the empire, and

even beyond it, when the Reformation raised a powerful barrier against its encroachments, and saved the independence of Europe.

As Judea, when Christianity first appeared, was in the centre of the old world, so Germany was the centre of Christendom. It touched, at the same time, in the Low Countries, England, France, Switzerland, Italy, Hungary, Bohemia, Poland, Denmark, and all the North. It was in the very heart of Europe that this principle of life was destined to be developed, and its pulsations were to circulate through the arteries of this great body the generous blood that was appointed to vivify all its members.

The particular form of constitution which the empire had received, conformable with the dispensations of Providence, favoured the propagation of new ideas. If Germany had been a monarchy strictly so called, like France or England, the arbitrary will of the sovereign might have sufficed to check for a while the progress of the Gospel. But it was a confederation. The truth, opposed in one state, might be received with favour in another.

The internal peace that Maximilian had secured to the empire was no less favourable to the Reformation. For a long time the numerous members of the Germanic body seemed to have taken a pleasure in tearing each other to pieces. Nothing had been seen but confusion, discord, and wars incessantly renewed. Neighbours were against neighbours, town against town, nobles against nobles. Maximilian had laid a firm foundation of public order in the Imperial Chamber, an institution appointed to decide all differences between the various states. The German nations, after so many disorders and anxieties, saw the beginning of a new era of security and repose. Nevertheless Germany, when Luther appeared, still presented to the eye of the observer that motion which agitates the sea after a storm of long continuance. The calm was yet uncertain. The first breeze might make the tempest burst forth anew. Of this we shall see more than one example. The Reformation, by communicating a new impulse to the German race, for ever destroyed the old causes of agitation. It put an end to the barbarous system that had hitherto prevailed, and gave a new one to Europe.

Meanwhile the religion of Jesus Christ had exerted on Germany its peculiar influence. The third estate (the commonalty) had rapidly advanced. In the different parts of the empire, particularly in the free cities, numerous institutions arose, calculated to develop this imposing mass of the people. There the arts flourished: the burghers devoted themselves in security to the tranquil labours and sweet relations of social life. They became more and more accessible to information. Thus they daily

acquired greater respect and influence. It was not magistrates, who are often compelled to adapt their conduct to the political exigencies of the times; or nobles passionately fond of military glory above all things; or an ambitious and greedy priesthood, trading with religion as its peculiar property, that were to found the Reformation in Germany. It was to be the work of the middle classes—of the people—of the whole nation.

The peculiar character of the Germans seemed especially favourable to a religious reformation. They had not been enervated by a false civilisation. The precious seeds that the fear of God deposits among a people had not been scattered to the winds. Ancient manners still survived. In Germany was found that uprightness, fidelity, and industry—that perseverance and religious disposition, which still flourishes there, and which promises greater success to the Gospel than the fickle, scornful, and sensual character of other European nations.

The Germans had received from Rome that great element of modern civilisation—the faith. Instruction, knowledge, legislation— all except their courage and their arms—had come to them from the sacerdotal city. Strong ties had from that time connected Germany with the Papacy. The former was a spiritual conquest of the latter, and we know to what use Rome has always applied her conquests. Other nations, who had possessed the faith and civilisation before the Roman pontiff existed, had maintained a greater independence with respect to it. But this subjection of the Germans was destined only to make the reaction more powerful at the moment of awakening. When the eyes of Germany should be opened, she would tear away the trammels in which she had so long been held captive. The slavery she had endured would give her a greater longing for deliverance and liberty, and the hardy champions of truth would go forth from that prison of restraint and discipline in which for ages her people had been confined.

There was at that time in Germany something very nearly resembling what in the political language of our days is termed "a seesaw system." When the head of the empire was of an energetic character, his power increased; when on the contrary he possessed little ability, the influence and authority of the princes and electors were augmented. Never had the latter felt more independent of their chief than under Maximilian at the period of the Reformation. And their leader having taken part against it, it is easy to understand how that very circumstance was favourable to the propagation of the Gospel.

In addition to this, Germany was weary of what Rome contemptuously denominated "the patience of the Germans." The latter had in truth shown much

patience since the time of Louis of Bavaria. From that period the emperors had laid down their arms, and the

tiara had been placed without resistance above the crown of the Caesars. But the strife had only changed its scene of action. It had descended to lower ground. These same struggles, of which popes and emperors had set the world an example, were soon renewed on a smaller scale in every city of Germany, between the bishops and the magistrates. The burghers had taken up the sword which the chiefs of the empire had let fall. As early as 1329, the citizens of Frankforton the Oder had resisted with intrepidity all their ecclesiastical superiors. Having been excommunicated for their fidelity to the Margrave Louis, they had remained for twenty-eight years without masses, baptism, marriage ceremonies, or funeral rites. The return of the priests and monks was greeted with laughter, like a comedy or farce. A deplorable error, no doubt, but the priests themselves were the cause of it. At the period of the Reformation these oppositions between the magistrates and the ecclesiastics had increased. Every hour the privileges and temporal assumptions of the clergy brought these two bodies into collision.

But it was not only among the burgomasters, councillors, and secretaries of the cities that Rome and her clergy found opponents. About the same time the indignation was at work among the populace. It broke out in 1493, and later in 1502, in the Rhenish provinces: the peasants, exasperated at the heavy yoke imposed upon them by their ecclesiastical sovereigns, formed among themselves what has been called the "League of the Shoes." They began to assemble by night in Alsacc, repairing by unfrequented paths to isolated hills, where they swore to pay in future no taxes but such as they had freely consented to, to abolish all tolls and jalage, to limit the power of the priests, and to plunder the Jews. Then placing a peasant's shoe on the end of a pole by way of standard, they marched against the town of Schlettstadt, proposing to call to their assistance the free confederation of the Swiss: but they were soon dispersed. This was only one of the symptoms of the general fermentation that agitated the castles, towns, and rural districts of the empire.

Thus everywhere, from high to low, was heard a hollow murmur, forerunner of the thunderbolt that was soon to fall. Germany appeared ripe for the appointed task of the sixteenth century. Providence in its slow progress had prepared everything; and even the passions which God condemns, were directed by his almighty hand to the accomplishment of his designs.

Let us take a glance at the other nations of Europe.

Thirteen small republics, placed with their allies in the centre of Europe, among mountains which seemed to form its citadel, composed a simple and brave nation. Who would have looked in those sequestered valleys for the men whom God would choose to be the liberators of the Church conjointly with the children of the Germans? Who would have thought that small unknown cities—scarcely raised above barbarism, hidden behind inaccessible mountains, on the shores of lakes that had found no name in history—would surpass, as regards Christianity, even Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome? Nevertheless such was the will of Him who "causeth it to rain upon one piece of land, and the piece of land whereupon it raineth not withereth."

Other circumstances besides seemed destined to oppose numerous obstacles to the progress of the Reformation in the bosom of the Helvetic population. If the obstructions of power were to be dreaded in a monarchy, the precipitancy of the people was to be feared in a democracy.

But in Switzerland, also, the way had been prepared for the truth. It was a wild but generous stock, that had been sheltered in her deep valleys, to be grafted one day with a fruit of great value. Providence had scattered among these new people principles of courage, independence, and liberty, that were to be developed in all their majesty, so soon as the day of battle against Rome should arrive. The pope had conferred upon the Swiss the title of Protectors of the Liberty of the Church. But they seem to have understood this honourable appellation in a sense somewhat different from the pontiff. If their soldiers guarded the pope beneath the shadow of the ancient Capitol, their citizens carefully protected in the bosom of the Alps their own religious liberties against the assaults of the pope and of the clergy. The ecclesiastics were forbidden to have recourse to any foreign jurisdiction. The "Letter of the Priests" (Pfaffenbrief, 1370) was a strong protest of Swiss independence against the abuses and power of the clergy. Zurich was distinguished among all the states by its courageous resistance to the claims of Rome. Geneva, at the other extremity of Switzerland, was contending with its bishop. These two cities distinguished themselves above all the others in the great struggle that we have undertaken to describe.

But if the Helvetian towns, accessible to every amelioration, were to be drawn into the reform movement, it was not to be the case with the inhabitants of the mountains. Knowledge had not yet reached them. These cantons, the founders of Swiss liberty, proud of the part they had taken in the struggle for independence, were not easily disposed to imitate their younger brothers of the plain. Why should they change that faith under which they had expelled the Austrian, and which had

consecrated by altars all the scenes of their triumphs? Their priests were the only enlightened guides to whom they could have recourse: their worship and their festivals relieved the monotony of their tranquil hours, and agreeably disturbed the silence of their peaceful homes. They remained steadfast against all religious innovations.

Passing the Alps, we find ourselves in that Italy which was in the eyes of the majority the holy land of Christendom. Whence could Europe have looked for the good of the Church if not from Italy—if not from Rome? Might not that power which raised successively so many different characters to the pontifical chair, some day place in it a pontiff who would become an instrument of blessing to the heritage of the Lord? If even there was no hope in the pontiffs, were there not bishops and councils that might reform the Church? Nothing good can come out of Nazareth: but from Jerusalem,—from Rome!... Such might have been the ideas of men; but "God's thoughts are not as their thoughts." He said, "He that is filthy let him be filthy still;" and abandoned Italy to her unrighteousness. That land of ancient renown was by turns the victim of intestine war and of foreign invasion. The stratagems of policy, the violence of factions, the strife of arms, seemed alone destined to prevail there, and to banish for a long season the peace of the Gospel.

Italy, broken to pieces, dismembered, and without unity, appeared but little suited to receive one general impulse. Each frontier was a new barrier where the truth would be stopped.

And if the truth was destined to come from the North, how could the Italians, with so refined a taste, and with social habits so delicate in their own eyes, condescend to receive anything from the barbarous Germans? Were the men who bestowed more admiration on the regular cadence of a sonnet than on the majesty and simplicity of the Scriptures, a proper soil for the seed of the word of God? A false civilisation is, of all the various conditions of a nation, that which is most repugnant to the Gospel.

Finally, whatever might be the state of affairs, Rome was always Rome to Italy. The temporal power of the popes not only led the different Italian states to court their alliance and their favour at any cost, but the universal dominion of Rome offered more than one inducement to the avarice and vanity of the ultramontane states. As soon as it became a question of emancipating the rest of the world from Rome, Italy would become Italy again; domestic quarrels would not prevail to the advantage of a foreign system; and attacks aimed against the chief of the peninsular family would be sufficient to awaken common interests and affections from their long slumber.

The Reformation had thus little prospect of success on that side of the Alps. Nevertheless, there were found beyond these mountains souls prepared to receive the light of the Gospel, and Italy was not at that hour entirely disinherited.

Spain possessed what Italy did not—a serious, noble-minded, and religiously disposed population. In every age this people has reckoned pious and learned men among the members of its clergy, and it was sufficiently remote from Rome to be able to throw off its yoke without difficulty. There are few nations in which we might have more reasonably hoped for a revival of that primitive Christianity which Spain had received perhaps from the hands of St. Paul himself. And yet Spain did not rise up among the nations. She was to fulfil this prophecy of Divine wisdom: The first shall be last. Various circumstances led to this mournful result.

Spain, considering its isolated position and distance from Germany, would be affected only in a slight degree by the shocks of that great earthquake which so violently agitated the empire. It was occupied, besides, with very different treasures from those which the word of God was then offering to the nations. The new world eclipsed the eternal world. A virgin soil, which seemed to consist of gold and silver, inflamed the imagination of all. An eager thirst for wealth left no room in the Spanish heart for nobler thoughts. A powerful clergy, having scaffolds and treasures at its disposal, ruled in the peninsula. Spain willingly rendered a servile obedience to her priests, which by releasing her from every spiritual anxiety, left her free to give way to her passions,—to go in pursuit of riches, discoveries, and new continents. Victorious over the Moors, she had, at the cost of her noblest blood, torn the crescent from the walls of Granada and many other cities, and planted the cross of Christ in its place. This great zeal for Christianity, which appeared destined to afford the liveliest expectations, turned against the truth. How could Catholic Spain, which had crushed infidelity, fail to oppose heresy? How could those who had driven Mahomet from their beautiful country allow Luther to penetrate into it? Their kings did even more: they equipped fleets against the Reformation, and went to Holland and to England in search of it, that they might subdue it.

But these attacks elevated the nations assailed; and erelong Spain was crushed by their united power. Thus, in consequence of the Reformation, did this Catholic country lose that temporal prosperity which had made it at first reject the spiritual liberty of the Gospel. Nevertheless, the dwellers beyond the Pyrenees were a brave and generous race. Many of its noble children, with the same ardour, but with more knowledge than those whose blood had stained the Moorish swords, came and laid down their lives as a sacrifice on the burning piles of the Inquisition.

The case was nearly the same in Portugal as in Spain. Emanuel the Fortunate gave it a "golden age," which unfitted it for the self-denial required by the Gospel. The Portuguese thronged the newly discovered roads to the East Indies and Brazil, and turned their backs on Europe and the Reformation. Few countries seemed better disposed for the reception of the evangelical doctrines than France. In that country almost all the intellectual and spiritual life of the Middle Ages had been concentrated. One might have been led to say, that paths had been opened in every direction for a great manifestation of the truth. Men of the most opposite characters, and whose influence had been most extensive over the French nation, were found to have some affinity with the Reformation. St. Bernard had given an example of that faith of the heart, of that inward piety, which is the noblest feature of the Reformation. Abelard had carried into the study of theology that rational principle, which, incapable of building up what is true, is powerful to destroy what is false. Numerous pretended heretics had rekindled the flames of the word of God in the provinces. The university of Paris had stood up against the Church, and had not feared to oppose it. At the commencement of the fifteenth century of Clemangis and the Gersons had spoken out with boldness.

The Pragmatic Sanction had been a great act of independence, and seemed destined to be the palladium of the Gallican liberties. The French nobles, so numerous and so jealous of their pre-eminence, and who at this period had seen their privileges gradually taken away to augment the kingly power, must have been favourably disposed to a religious revolution that might have restored some portion of the independence they had lost. The people, quick, intelligent, and susceptible of generous emotions, were as accessible to the truth as any other, if not more so. The Reformation in this country seemed likely to crown the long travail of many centuries. But the chariot of France, which appeared for so many generations to be hastening onwards in the same direction, suddenly turned aside at the epoch of the Reformation, and took quite a contrary course. Such is the will of Him who is the guide of nations and of their rulers. The prince who was then seated in the chariot and held the reins, and who, as a patron of literature, seemed of all the chiefs of Roman Catholicism likely to be the foremost in promoting the Reformation, threw his subjects into another path.

The symptoms of many centuries proved fallacious, and the impulse given to France was unavailing against the ambition and fanaticism of her kings. The house of Valois deprived her of that which should have belonged to her. Perhaps had she received the Gospel, she would have become too powerful. It was God's will to select weaker nations—nations just rising into existence, to be the depositories of his truth.

France, after having been almost entirely reformed, found herself Roman Catholic in the end. The sword of her princes thrown into the balance made it incline towards Rome. Alas! another sword—that of the Reformers themselves—completed the destruction of the Reformation. Hands that had been used to wield the sword, ceased to be raised to heaven in prayer. It is by the blood of its confessors, and not of its adversaries, that the Gospel triumphs.

At the era of the Reformation the Netherlands was one of the most flourishing countries of Europe. Its people were industrious, enlightened in consequence of the numerous relations they maintained with the different parts of the world, full of courage, and enthusiastic in the cause of their independence, privileges, and liberties. Situated at the very gates of Germany, it would be one of the first to hear the report of the Reformation. Two very distinct parties composed its population. The more southern portion, that overflowed with wealth, gave way. How could all these manufactures carried to the highest degree of perfection—this immense commerce by land and sea—Bruges, that great mart of the northern trade—Antwerp, the queen of merchant cities—how could all these resign themselves to a long and bloody struggle about questions of faith? On the contrary, the northern provinces, defended by their sandhills, the sea, and their canals, and still more by the simplicity of their manners, and their determination to lose everything rather than the Gospel, not only preserved their freedom, their privileges, and their faith, but even achieved their independence and a glorious nationality.

England gave but little promise of what she afterwards became. Driven out of the continent, where she had long and obstinately attempted the conquest of France, she began to turn her eyes towards the sea, as to a kingdom destined to be the real object of her conquests, and whose inheritance was reserved for her. Twice converted to Christianity—once under the ancient Britons, and again under the Anglo-Saxons—she paid with great devotion the annual tribute of St. Peter's pence. Yet high destinies were in reserve for her. Mistress of the ocean, and touching at once upon all quarters of the globe, she was to become one day, with the nation to which she should give birth, the hand of God to scatter the seeds of life in the most distant islands and over the widest continents. Already there were a few circumstances foreboding her mighty destiny: great learning had shone in the British islands, and some glimmerings of it still remained. A crowd of foreigners—artists, merchants, and artisans—coming from the Low Countries, Germany, and other places, filled their cities and their havens. The new religious ideas would thus easily be carried thither. Finally, England had then for king an eccentric prince, who, endowed with some information and great courage, changed his projects and his ideas every hour, and turned from one side to the other according to the direction in which his violent passions drove him. It was

possible that one of the Eighth Henry's caprices might some day be favourable to the Reformation.

Scotland was at this time distracted by factions. A king of five years old, a queen-regent, ambitious nobles, and an influential clergy, harassed this courageous people in every direction. They were destined, however, erelong to shine in the first rank among those who should receive the Reformation.

The three kingdoms of the North—Denmark, Sweden, and Norway—were united under a common sceptre. These rude and warlike people seemed to have little connection with the doctrine of love and peace. Yet by their very energy they were perhaps better disposed than the nations of the South to receive the power of the Gospel. But these sons of warriors and of pirates brought, methinks, too warlike a character into that protestant cause, which their swords in later times so heroically defended.

Russia, driven into the extremity of Europe, had but few relations with the other states. Besides, she belonged to the Greek communion; and the Reformation effected in the Western exerted little or no influence on the Eastern church.

Poland seemed well prepared for a reform. The neighbourhood of the Bohemian and Moravian Christians had disposed it to receive the evangelical impulse, which by its vicinity to Germany was likely to be promptly communicated. As early as 1500 the nobility of Great Poland had demanded that the cup should be given to the laity, by appealing to the customs of the primitive Church. The liberty enjoyed in its cities, the independence of its nobles, made it a secure asylum for all Christians who had been persecuted in their own country. The truth they carried with them was joyfully received by a great number of the inhabitants. Yet it is one of the countries which, in our days, possesses the fewest confessors.

The flame of the Reformation, which had long burnt brightly in Bohemia, had been nearly extinguished in blood. Nevertheless, some precious remnants, escaped from the slaughter, were still alive to see the day which Huss had foretold.

Hungary had been torn in pieces by intestine wars under the government of princes without ability or experience, and who had eventually bound the fate of their subjects to Austria, by enrolling this powerful family among the heirs to their crown.

Such was the state of Europe at the beginning of the sixteenth century, which was destined to produce so great a transformation in Christian society.

CHAPTER 6

Roman Theology—Remains of Life—Justification by Faith—Witnesses to the Truth—Claudius—The Mystics—The Waldenses—Valdo—Wickliffe—Huss—Prediction— Protestantism before the Reformation—Anselm—Arnoldi—Utenheim—Martin—New Witnesses in the Church—Thomas Conecte—The Cardinal of Crayn—Institoris—Savonarola—Justification by Faith—John Vitrarius—John Lallier—John of Wesalia—John of Goch—John Wessel—Protestantism before the Reformation—The Bohemian Brethren—Prophecy of Proles—Prophecy of the Eisenach Franciscan

Having described the condition of the nations and princes of Europe, we now proceed to the preparations for the great Reform which existed in theology and in the Church.

The singular system of theology that was established in the Church, was destined to contribute powerfully to open the eyes of the new generation. Formed for an age of darkness, as if that age would last for ever, that system was to be left behind, and to be rent in every direction, so soon as the age grew in understanding. This was the result. The popes had added now this and now that to the Christian doctrines. They had neither changed nor removed anything except it would not square with their hierarchical system; what was not contrary to their plans might remain until further orders. It contained certain true doctrines, such as Redemption, and the power of the Holy Ghost, of which a skillful divine, if there was one to be found at that time, might have availed himself to combat and overthrow all the others. The pure gold mingled with the base alloy in the treasures of the Vatican, might have easily led to the discovery of the fraud. It is true, that if any courageous adversary turned his attention towards it, the winnowing-fan of Rome immediately swept away this pure grain. But these very condemnations only served to augment the confusion.

This confusion was immense, and the pretended unity was but one wide disorder. At Rome there were the doctrines of the court and the doctrines of the church. The faith of the metropolis differed from that of the provinces. In the latter, too, this diversity was infinite. There was the faith of the princes, of the people, and of the religious orders. There was a distinction between the opinions of this convent and of that district, of this doctor and of that monk.

In order that the truth might exist peaceably in the ages when Rome would have crushed her with its iron sceptre, she had followed the example of the insect that weaves a chrysalis of its threads in which to shelter itself during the inclement season. And, strange to say, the instruments employed by divine truth to this end were the

so much decried schoolmen. These industrious artisans of thought had unravelled every theological idea, and of all their threads had woven a web, under which it would have been difficult for more skillful persons than their contemporaries to recognise the truth in its pristine purity. We may regret that the insect, so full of life, and glowing with the brightest colours, should enclose itself, to all appearance dead, in its dark cell; but in this covering is its safety. The case was the same with truth. If the interested and suspicious policy of Rome, in the day of its power, had seen her unveiled, it would have crushed her, or at least endeavoured so to do. Disguised as she was by the theologians of the time, under endless subtleties and distinctions, the popes did not recognise her, or saw that in this condition she could not injure them. They took the work and the workmen under their protection. But the season might come in which this hidden truth would raise her head, and throw off the toils that had covered her. Having gained new strength in her apparent tomb, she would be seen in the day of her resurrection gaining the victory over Rome and its errors. This springtime arrived. At the very period when these absurd coverings of the schoolmen were falling one after another under the skillful attacks and the sneers of the new generation, the truth issued from them, blooming in youth and beauty.

It was not alone from the writings of the schoolmen that powerful testimony was given to the truth. Christianity had everywhere mingled something of its own life with the life of the people. The Church of Christ was a dilapidated building; but in digging around it, a portion of the living rock on which it had been originally built was discovered among its foundations. Numerous institutions dating from the pure ages of the Church still existed, and could not fail to awaken in many souls evangelical sentiments opposed to the prevailing superstition. Inspired men, the old doctors of the Church, whose writings were deposited in various libraries, raised here and there a solitary voice. We may hope that it was listened to in silence by many an attentive ear. Let us not doubt that the Christians—and how pleasing is the thought!—had many brethren and sisters in those monasteries, where we too easily discover little else than hypocrisy and licentiousness.

The Church had fallen, because the great doctrine of justification by faith in the Saviour had been taken away from her. It was necessary, therefore, before she could rise again, that this doctrine should be restored to her. As soon as the fundamental truth should be re-established in Christendom, all the errors and observances that had taken its place—all that multitude of saints, of works, penances, masses, indulgences, &c, would disappear. As soon as the one only Mediator and his only sacrifice were acknowledged, all other mediators and sacrifices would vanish. "This article of justification," says a man whom we may consider enlightened on the matter, "is what creates the Church, nourishes it, edifies it, preserves and defends it: no one

can teach worthily in the Church, or oppose an adversary with success, if he does not adhere to this truth. This," adds the writer whom we quote, in allusion to the earliest prophecy, "is the heel that shall bruise the head of the serpent."

God, who was preparing his work, raised up during the course of ages a long line of witnesses to the truth. But of this truth to which these generous men bore witness, they had not a sufficiently clear knowledge, or at least were not able to set it forth with adequate distinctness. Unable to accomplish this task, they were all that they should have been to prepare the way for it. Let us add, however, that if they were not ready for the work, the work was not ready for them. The measure was not yet full: the ages had not yet accomplished their prescribed course; the need of the true remedy was not as yet generally felt.

Scarcely had Rome usurped her power, before a strong opposition was formed against her, which was continued during the Middle Ages.

Archbishop Claudius of Turin, in the ninth century; Pierre de Bruys, his disciple Henry, and Arnold of Brescia, in the twelfth century, in France and in Italy, laboured to re-establish the worship of God in spirit and in truth; but for the most part they looked for this worship too much in the absence of images and of outward observances.

The Mystics, who have existed in almost every age, seeking in silence for holiness of heart, righteousness of life, and tranquil communion with God, beheld with sorrow and affright the abominations of the Church. They carefully abstained from the quarrels of the schools and from the useless discussions under which real piety had been buried. They endeavoured to withdraw men from the vain formality of external worship, from the noise and pomp of ceremonies, to lead them to that inward repose of a soul which looks to God for all its happiness. They could not do this without coming into collision on every side with the received opinions, and without laying bare the wounds of the Church. But at the same time they had not a clear notion of the doctrine of justification by faith.

The Waldenses, far superior to the Mystics in purity of doctrine, compose a long line of witnesses to the truth. Men more unfettered than the rest of the Church seem from the most distant times to have inhabited the summits of the Piedmontese Alps; their number was augmented and their doctrine purified by the disciples of Valdo. From their mountain heights the Waldenses protested during a long series of ages against the superstitions of Rome. "They contend for the lively hope which they have in God through Christ—for the regeneration and interior revival by faith, hope,

and charity—for the merits of Jesus Christ, and the all-sufficiency of his grace and righteousness."

Yet this primal truth of the justification of sinners,—this main doctrine, that should have risen from the midst of all the rest like Mont Blanc from the bosom of the Alps, was not sufficiently prominent in their system. Its summit was not yet raised high enough.

Pierre Vaud or Valdo, a rich merchant of Lyons (1170), sold all his goods and gave them to the poor. He and his friends appear to have aimed at reestablishing the perfection of primitive Christianity in the common affairs of life. He therefore began also with the branches and not with the roots. Nevertheless his preaching was powerful because he appealed to Scripture, and it shook the Roman hierarchy to its very foundations.

Wickliffe arose in England in 1360, and appealed from the pope to the word of God: but the real internal wound in the body of the Church was in his eyes only one of the numerous symptoms of the disease.

John Huss preached in Bohemia a century before Luther preached in Saxony. He seems to have penetrated deeper than his predecessors into the essence of Christian truth. He prayed to Christ for grace to glory only in his cross and in the inestimable humiliation of his sufferings. But his attacks were directed less against the errors of the Romish church than the scandalous lives of the clergy. Yet he was, if we may be allowed the expression, the John Baptist of the Reformation. The flames of his pile kindled a fire in the Church that cast a brilliant light into the surrounding darkness, and whose glimmerings were not to be so readily extinguished.

John Huss did more: prophetic words issued from the depths of his dungeon. He foresaw that a real reformation of the Church was at hand. When driven out of Prague and compelled to wander through the fields of Bohemia, where an immense crowd followed his steps and hung upon his words, he had cried out: "The wicked have begun by preparing a treacherous snare for the goose. But if even the goose, which is only a domestic bird, a peaceful animal, and whose flight is not very high in the air, has nevertheless broken through their toils, other birds, soaring more boldly towards the sky, will break through them with still greater force. Instead of a feeble goose, the truth will send forth eagles and keen-eyed vultures." This prediction was fulfilled by the reformers.

When the venerable priest had been summoned by Sigismund's order before the council of Constance, and had been thrown into prison, the chapel of Bethlehem, in which he had proclaimed the Gospel and the future triumphs of Christ, occupied his mind, much more than his own defence. One night the holy martyr saw in imagination, from the depths of his dungeon, the pictures of Christ that he had painted on the walls of his oratory, effaced by the pope and his bishops. This vision distressed him: but on the next day he saw many painters occupied in restoring these figures in greater number and in brighter colours. As soon as their task was ended, the painters, who were surrounded by an immense crowd, exclaimed: "Now let the popes and bishops come! they shall never efface them more!" And many people rejoiced in Bethlehem, and I with them, adds John Huss.—"Busy yourself with your defence rather than with your dreams,"said his faithful friend, the knight of Chlum, to whom he had communicated this vision. "I am no dreamer," replied Huss, "but I maintain this for certain, that the image of Christ will never be effaced. They have wished to destroy it, but it shall be painted afresh in all hearts by much better preachers than myself. The nation that loves Christ will rejoice at this. And I, awaking from among the dead, and rising, so to speak, from my grave, shall leap with great joy."

A century passed away; and the torch of the Gospel, lighted up anew by the reformers, illuminated indeed many nations, that rejoiced in its brightness.

But it was not only among those whom the church of Rome looks upon as her adversaries that the word of life was heard during these ages. Catholicism itself—let us say it for our consolation— courts numerous witnesses to the truth within its pale. The primitive building had been consumed; but a generous fire smouldered beneath its ashes, and from time to time sent forth many brilliant sparks.

It is an error to believe that Christianity did not exist before the Reformation, save under the Roman Catholic form, and that it was not till then that a section of the Church assumed the form of Protestantism.

Among the doctors who flourish prior to the sixteenth century, a great number no doubt had a leaning towards the system which the Council of Trent put forth in 1562; but many also inclined towards the doctrines professed at Augsburg by the Protestants in 1530; and the majority perhaps oscillated between these two poles.

Anselm of Canterbury laid down as the very essence of Christianity the doctrines of the incarnation and atonement; and in a work in which he teaches us how to die, he says to the departing soul: "Look only to the merits of Jesus Christ." St. Bernard

proclaimed with a powerful voice the mysteries of Redemption. "If my sin cometh from another," says he, "why should not my righteousness be granted me in the same manner? Assuredly it is better for me that it should be given me, than that it should be innate." Many schoolmen, and in later times the Chancellor Gerson, vigorously attacked the errors and abuses of the Church.

But let us reflect above all on the thousands of souls, obscure and unknown to the world, who have nevertheless been partakers of the real life of Christ. A monk named Arnoldi everyday offered up this fervent prayer in his quiet cell: "O Lord Jesus Christ! I believe that thou alone art my redemption and my righteousness."

Christopher of Utenheim, a pious bishop of Basle, had his name inscribed on a picture painted on glass, which is still in that city, and surrounded it with this motto, which he desired to have continually before his eyes: "My hope is in the cross of Christ; I seek grace and not works."

A poor Carthusian friar, named Martin, wrote a touching confession, in which he says: "O most merciful God! I know that I cannot be saved and satisfy thy righteousness otherwise than by the merits, by the most innocent passion, and by the death of thy dearly beloved Son Holy Jesus! all my salvation is in thy hands. Thou canst not turn away from me the hands of thy love, for they have created me, formed me, and redeemed me. Thou hast written my name with an iron pen, in great mercy and in an indelible manner, on thy side, on thy hands, and on thy feet," &c.&c. Then the good Carthusian placed his confession in a wooden box, and enclosed it in a hole he made in the wall of his cell.

The piety of brother Martin would never have been known, if the box had not been discovered on the 21st December 1776, as some workmen were pulling down an old building that had formed part of the Carthusian convent at Basle. How many convents may not have concealed such treasures!

But these holy men possessed this touching faith for themselves alone, and knew not how to communicate it to others. Living in retirement, they could say more or less what brother Martin confided to his box: "And if I cannot confess these things with my mouth, I confess them at least with my pen and with my heart." The word of truth was in the sanctuary of a few pious souls; but, to use the language of the Gospel, it had not "free course" in the world.

However, if they did not always confess aloud the doctrine of salvation, they were not afraid at least to protest openly even in the bosom of the Church of Rome, against the abuses that disgraced it.

Scarcely had the Councils of Constance and Basle, in which Huss and his disciples had been condemned, terminated their sittings, when this noble line of witnesses against Rome, which we have pointed out, recommenced with greater brilliancy. Men of generous dispositions, shocked at the abominations of the papacy, arose like the Old Testament prophets, whose fate they also shared, and uttered like them their denunciations in a voice of thunder. Their blood stained the scaffolds, and their ashes were scattered to the winds.

Thomas Conecte, a Carmelite friar, appeared in Flanders. He declared that "the grossest abominations were practiced at Rome, that the Church required a reform, and that so long as we served God, we should not fear the pope's excommunications." All the country listened with enthusiasm; Rome condemned him to the stake in 1432, and his contemporaries declared that he had been translated to heaven.

Cardinal Andrew, archbishop of Crayn, being sent to Rome as the emperor's ambassador, was struck with dismay at discovering that the papal sanctity, in which he had devoutly believed, was a mere fiction; and in his simplicity he addressed Sixtus IV in the language of evangelical remonstrance. Mockery and persecution were his only answer. Upon this he endeavoured in 1482 to assemble a new council at Basle. "The whole Church," said he, "is shaken by divisions, heresies, sins, vices, unrighteousness, errors, and countless evils, so as to be nigh swallowed up by the devouring abyss of damnation. For this reason we proclaim a general council for the reformation of the Catholic faith and the purification of morals." The archbishop was thrown into prison at Basle, where he died. The inquisitor, Henry Institoris, who was the first to oppose him, uttered these remarkable words: "All the world cries out and demands a council; but there is no human power that can reform the Church by a council. The Most High will find other means, which are at present unknown to us, although they may be at our very doors, to bring back the Church to its pristine condition." This remarkable prophecy, delivered by an inquisitor, at the very period of Luther's birth, is the best apology for the Reformation.

Jerome Savonarola shortly after entering the Dominican order at Bologna in 1475, devoted himself to continual prayers, fasting, and mortification, and cried, "Thou, O God, art good, and in thy goodness teach me thy righteousness." He preached with energy in Florence, to which city he had removed in 1489. His voice carried conviction; his countenance was lit up with enthusiasm; and his action

possessed enchanting grace. "We must regenerate the Church," said he; and he professed the great principle that alone could effect this regeneration. "God," he exclaimed, "remits the sins of men, and justifies them by his mercy. There are as many compassions in heaven as there are justified men upon earth; for none are saved by their own works. No man can boast of himself; and if, in the presence of God, we could ask all these justified sinners— Have you been saved by your own strength?— all would reply as with one voice, Not unto us, O Lord! not unto us; but to thy name be the glory!—Therefore, O God, do I seek thy mercy, and I bring not unto thee my own righteousness; but when by thy grace thou justifiest me, then thy righteousness belongs unto me; for grace is the righteousness of God.—So long, O man, so long as thou believest not, thou art, because of thy sin, destitute of grace.—O God, save me by thy righteousness, that is to say, in thy Son, who alone among men was found without sin!" Thus did the grand and holy doctrine of justification by faith gladden Savonarola's heart. In vain did the presidents of the Churches oppose him; he knew that the oracles of God were far above the visible Church, and that he must proclaim these oracles with the aid of the Church, without it, or even in spite of it. "Fly," cried he, "fly far from Babylon!" and it was Rome that he thus designated, and Rome erelong replied in her usual manner. In 1497, the infamous Alexander VI issued a brief against him; and in 1498, torture and the stake terminated this reformer's life.

John Vitrarius, a Franciscan monk of Tournay, whose monastic spirit does not appear to have been of a very lofty range, vigorously attacked the corruptions of the Church. "It is better to cut a child's throat (he said) than to place him in a religious order that is not reformed.—If thy curate, or any other priest, detains a woman in his house, you should go and drag the woman by force, or otherwise, out of the house.—There are some who repeat certain prayers to the Virgin Mary, that they may see her at the hour of death. But thou shalt see the devil, and not the virgin." A recantation was required, and the monk gave way in 1498.

John Lallier, doctor of the Sorbonne, stood forth in 1484 against the tyrannical dominion of the hierarchy. "All the clergy," said he, "have received equal power from Christ.—The Roman Church is not the head of other Churches.—You should keep the commandments of God and of the apostles: and as for the commandments of bishops and all the other lords of the Church they are but straw! They have ruined the Church by their crafty devices.—The priests of the Eastern Church sin not by marrying, and I believe that in the Western Church we should not sin were we also to marry.—Since the time of Sylvester, the Romish Church is no longer the Church of Christ, but a state church—a money-getting church.—We are not bound to believe in the legends of the saints, any more than in the Chronicles of France."

John of Wesalia, doctor of divinity at Erfurth, a man distinguished for this energy and talents, attacked the errors on which the hierarchy was founded, and proclaimed the Holy Scriptures as the only source of faith. "It is not religion (by which he meant a monastic life) that saves us," said he to the monks; "it is the grace of God.—God from all eternity has established a book in which he has written the names of all his elect. Whoever is not inscribed therein, will never be so; and whoever is therein inscribed, will never see his name blotted out.—It is by the grace of God alone that the elect are saved. He whom God is willing to save by the gift of his grace, will be saved, though all the priests in the world should wish to condemn and excommunicate him. And he whom God will condemn, though all should wish to save him, will nevertheless be condemned.—By what audacity do the successors of the apostles enjoin, not what Christ has prescribed in his holy books, but what they themselves have devised, carried away, as they are, by thirst for gold and by the desire of ruling?—I despise the Pope, the Church and, the Councils, and I give Christ the glory."

Wesalia, having arrived gradually at these convictions, professed them boldly from the pulpit, and entered into communication with the delegates from the Hussites. Feeble, and bending under the weight of years, a prey to sickness and leaning upon his staff, this courageous old man appeared with tottering steps before the Inquisition, and perished in its dungeons in 1482.

John of Goch, prior of Malines, about the same period, extolled christian liberty as the essence of every virtue. He charged the prevailing doctrines with Pelagianism, and denominated Thomas Aquinas "the prince of error." "The canonical scriptures alone," said he, "are entitled to a sure confidence, and have an undeniable authority. The writings of the ancient Fathers have no authority, but so far as they are conformable with canonical truth. The common proverb says truly: Satan would be ashamed to think of what a monk dares undertake."

But the most remarkable of these forerunners of the Reformation was undoubtedly John Wessel, surnamed "the Light of the World," a man full of courage and of love for the truth, who was doctor in divinity successively at Cologne, Louvain, Paris, Heidelberg, and Groningen, and of whom Luther says: "Had I read his works sooner, my enemies might have thought I had derived everything from Wessel, so much are we of one mind."—"St. Paul and St. James," says Wessel, "preach different but not contrary doctrines. Both maintain that 'the just shall live by faith;' but by a faith working by charity. He who, at the sound of the Gospel, believes, desires, hopes, trusts in the glad tidings, and loves Him who justifies and blesses him, forthwith yields himself up entirely to Him whom he loves, and attributes no merit to himself,

since he knows that of himself he has nothing.—The sheep must discern the things on which he feeds, and avoid a corrupted nutriment, even when presented by the shepherd himself. The people should follow the shepherd into the pastures; but when he ceases to lead them into the pastures, he is no longer a shepherd, and then, since he does not fulfil his duty, the flock is not bound to follow him. Nothing is more effectual to the destruction of the Church than a corrupted clergy. All Christians, even the humblest and most simple, are bound to resist those who are destroying the Church. We must obey the precepts of doctors and of prelates only according to the measure laid down by St. Paul (1 Thessalonians 5:21); that is to say, so far as, 'sitting in Moses' seat,' they teach according to Moses. We are God's servants, and not the pope's, as it is said: Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. The Holy Spirit has reserved to himself the duty of renewing, vivifying, preserving, and increasing the unity of the Church, and has not abandoned it to the Roman pontiff, who frequently cares nothing about it.—Even her sex does not prevent a woman, if she is faithful and prudent, and if she has charity shed abroad in her heart, from being able to feel, judge, approve, and decide by a judgment that God will ratify."

Thus, in proportion as the Reformation drew nigh, were the voices multiplied that proclaimed the truth. We might be led to say that the Church intended showing by these means that the Reformation existed before Luther. Protestantism arose in the Church on the very day in which the germs of Popery showed themselves; as in the political world conservative principles have existed from the very moment when the despotism of nobles or the disorders of factions have raised their heads. Protestantism was sometimes even stronger than the Papacy in the centuries immediately preceding the Reformation. What could Rome oppose to all the witnesses we have just heard, at the time when their voices re-echoed through the earth?—A few monks without either learning or piety.

To this we may add, that the Reformation had taken root, not only among the doctors of the Church, but also among the people. The opinions of Wickliffe, issuing from Oxford, had spread over all Christendom, and had found adherents in Bavaria, Swabia, Franconia, and Prussia. In Bohemia, from the very bosom of discord and of war, had come forth at last a peaceful and christian community, reminding the world of the primitive Church, and giving powerful testimony to the grand principle of Gospel opposition, that "Christ, and not Peter and his successors, is the rock on which the Church is founded." Belonging equally to the German and Sclavonic races, these simple Christians had sent forth missionaries into the midst of the various nations who spoke their language, noiselessly to gain over followers to their opinions.

Nicholas Kuss, who was twice visited by them at Rostock, began in 1511 to preach openly against the pope.

It is important to notice this state of affairs. When the Wisdom from on high shall utter his lessons in a still louder voice, there will be minds and hearts everywhere to listen to them. When the Husbandman, who has been continually traversing his Church, shall go forth to a new and to a greater sowing, the soil will be prepared to receive the grain. When the trumpet of the Angel of the covenant, that has never ceased to be heard in the world, shall send forth a louder peal, numbers will gird themselves to the battle.

The Church already had a presentiment that the hour of combat was approaching. If more than one philosopher announced in some measure, during the last century, the revolution in which it closed, shall we be astonished that many doctors at the end of the fifteenth century had foreseen the approaching change that would regenerate the Church?

Andrew Proles, provincial of the Augustines, who for nearly half a century presided over that congregation, and who, with unshaken firmness, maintained in his order the doctrines of St. Augustine, being assembled with his brethren in the convent of Himmelspforte, near Wernigerode, used often to stop them while reading the word of God, and say: "My brethren! ye hear the testimony of the Holy Scriptures! They declare that by grace we are what we are, and that by it alone we hold all that we possess. Whence then proceed so much darkness and such horrible superstitions? Oh, my brethren! Christianity needs a bold and a great reform, and methinks I see it already approaching."

Then would the monks cry out, "Why do you not begin this reform yourself, and oppose such a cloud of errors?"—"You see, my brethren," replied the aged provincial, "that I am bent with the weight of years, and weak in body, and that I have not the learning, ability, and eloquence, that so great an undertaking requires. But God will raise up a hero, who by his age, strength, talents, learning, genius, and eloquence, shall hold the foremost place. He will begin the Reformation; he will oppose error, and God will give him boldness to resist the mighty ones of the earth." An old monk of Himmelspforte, who had often heard these words, communicated them to Flacius. It was in the very order of which Proles was provincial that the Christian hero he foretold was to appear.

A monk named John Hilten was an inmate of the Franciscan convent at Eisenach in Thuringia. The prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation of St. John were his

especial study. He even wrote a commentary on these works, and censured the most flagrant abuses of the monastic life. The exasperated monks threw him into prison. His advanced age and the filthiness of his dungeon brought on a dangerous illness: he asked for the superior, and the latter had scarcely arrived before he burst into a violent passion, and without listening to the prisoner's complaints, bitterly abused his doctrine, that was opposed, adds the chronicle, to the monks' kitchen. The Franciscan, forgetting his malady and groaning heavily, replied: "I bear your insults calmly for the love of Christ; for I have said nothing that can endanger the monastic state: I have only censured its most crying abuses. But," continued he (according to what Melancthon records in his Apology for the Augsburg Confession of Faith), "another man will arise in the year of our Lord 1516: he will destroy you, and you shall not be able to resist him." John Hilten, who had prophesied that the end of the world would come in 1651, was less mistaken in pointing out the year when the future Reformer would appear. Not long after, he was born in a small village at a little distance from the monk's dungeon: in this very town of Eisenach he commenced his studies, and only one year later than the imprisoned friar had stated, he publicly entered upon the Reformation.

CHAPTER 7

Third Preparation—Letters—Revival—Recollections of Antiquity in Italy—Influence of the Humanists—Christianity of Dante—Valla—Infidelity in Italy—Platonic Philosophy—Commencement of learning in Germany—Young Students—Printing—Characteristics of German Literature—The Learned and the Schoolmen—A New World—Reuchlin—Reuchlin in Italy—His Labours—His Influence in Germany—Mysticism—Contest with the Dominicans

Thus princes and people, living members of the Church and theologians, were labouring each in their sphere to prepare the work which the sixteenth century was to accomplish. But the Reformation was destined to find another auxiliary in learning. The human mind was gaining strength. This circumstance alone would have wrought its emancipation. Let but a small seed fall near a time-eaten wall, and as the tree grows up, the wall will be overthrown.

The Roman pontiff had constituted himself the guardian of the people, and his superior intelligence rendered this an easy task. For a long time he had kept them in a state of pupilage, but now they were breaking bounds on every side. This venerable guardianship, which derived its origin from the principles of eternal life and civilisation that Rome had communicated to the barbarous nations, could no longer be exercised without opposition. A formidable antagonist had taken up his position against it in order to control it. The natural tendency of the human mind to expand, to examine, to learn, had given birth to this new power. Men's eyes were opened: they demanded a reason for each step taken by this long-venerated guide, under whose direction they had walked in silence, so long as their eyes were closed. The nations of modern Europe had passed the age of infancy; their manhood was beginning. Their artless and credulous simplicity had given way to an inquiring spirit—to a reason impatient to fathom things to the very bottom. They asked what had been God's object in making a revelation to the world, and whether men had a right to set themselves up as mediators between God and their brethren.

One thing only could have saved the church: this was to elevate itself still higher than the people. To be on a level with them was not sufficient. But men soon found, on the contrary, that she was much below them. She began to take a downward course, at the very time that they were ascending. When men began to soar towards the regions of intelligence, the priesthood was found engrossed in earthly pursuits and human interests. It is a phenomenon that has often been renewed in history. The eaglet's wings had grown; and there was no man whose hand could reach it and stay its flight.

It was in Italy that the human mind first began to soar above the earth. The doctrines of the schoolmen and romantic poetry had never reigned undisturbed in that peninsula. Some faint recollections of antiquity had always remained in Italy,—recollections that were revived in great strength towards the end of the Middle Ages, and which erelong communicated a fresh impulse to the human mind.

Already in the fourteenth century had Dante and Petrarch revived the credit of the ancient Roman poets; at the same time the former placed the mightiest popes in his "Inferno," and the second called with boldness for the primitive constitution of the Church. At the beginning of the fifteenth century John of Ravenna taught the Latin literature with great renown at Padua and Florence; and Chrysoloras interpreted the masterpieces of Greece at Florence and at Pavia.

While learning was thus issuing from the prisons in which it had been held captive in Europe, the East imparted fresh light to the West. The standard of Mahomet, planted on the walls of Constantinople in 1453, had driven its learned men into exile. They had carried the learning of Greece with them into Italy. The torch of the ancients rekindled the minds that had been for ages quenched in darkness. George of Trebizond, Argyropolos, Bessarion, Lascaris, Chalcondylas, and many others, inspired the West with their own love for Greece and its noble works of genius. The patriotism of the Italians was awakened; and there arose in Italy a great number of learned men, among whom shone Gasparino, Aurispa, Aretino, Poggio, and Valla, who endeavoured in like manner to restore the writers of ancient Rome to the honour they merited. There was at that period a great burst of light, and Rome was doomed to suffer by it.

This passion for antiquity which took possession of the humanists, shook in the most elevated minds their attachment to the Church, for "no man can serve two masters." At the same time the studies to which they devoted themselves, placed at the disposition of these learned men a method entirely new and unknown to the schoolmen, of examining and judging the teaching of the Church. Finding in the Bible, much more than in the works of theologians, the beauties that charmed them in the classic authors, the humanists were fully inclined to place the Bible above the doctors. They reformed the taste, and thus prepared the way for the Reformation of the faith.

These scholars, it is true, loudly protested that their studies did not strike at the faith of the Church; yet they attacked the schoolmen long before the Reformers did and turned into ridicule those barbarians, those "Teutons," who had existed but not lived. Some even proclaimed the doctrines of the Gospel, and laid hands on what Rome held most dear. Dante, although adhering to many Romish doctrines, had

already proclaimed the power of faith, as did the reformers. "It is true faith that renders us citizens of heaven," said he. "Faith according to the Gospel is the principle of life; it is the spark that, spreading daily more and more, becomes a living flame, and shines on us, like a star in heaven. Without faith there is no good work, nor upright life, that can avail us. However great be the sin, the arms of Divine grace are wider still, and embrace all who turn to God. The soul is not lost through the anathemas of the pontiff; and eternal love can still reach it, so long as hope retains her verdant blossom. From God, from God alone, cometh our righteousness by faith." And speaking of the Church, Dante exclaims: "O my bark, how deeply art thou laden! O Constantine, what mischief has been engendered, I will not say by thy conversion, but by that offering which the wealthy father then received from thee!"

Somewhat later, Laurentius Valla applied the study of antiquity to the opinions of the Church: he denied the authenticity of the correspondence between Christ and King Abgar; he rejected the tradition of the drawing up of the Apostles' Creed; and sapped the foundation on which reposed the pretended donation of Constantine.

Still this great light which the study of antiquity threw out in the fifteenth century was calculated only to destroy: it could not build up. Neither Homer nor Virgil could save the Church. The revival of learning, sciences, and arts, was not the principle of the Reformation. The paganism of the poets, as it reappeared in Italy, rather confirmed the paganism of the heart. The skepticism of the followers of Aristotle, and the contempt for everything that did not appertain to philology, took possession of many literary men, and engendered an incredulity which, even while affecting submission to the Church, attacked the most important truths of religion. Peter Pomponatius, the most distinguished representative of this impious tendency, publicly taught at Bologna and Padua that the immortality of the soul and the doctrine of providence were mere philosophical problems. John Francis Pico, nephew of Pico of Mirandola, speaks of one pope who did not believe in God; and of another who, having acknowledged to a friend his disbelief in the immortality of the soul, appeared to him one night after death, and said: "Alas! the eternal fire that is now consuming me makes me feel but too sensibly the immortality of soul which I had thought would die with the body!" This may remind us of those remarkable words spoken, it is asserted, by Leo X to his secretary Bembo: "Every age knows how useful this fable of Christ has been to us and ours" Contemptible superstitions were attacked, but incredulity with its disdainful and mocking sneer was set up in their place. To laugh at everything, even at what was most holy, was the fashion and the badge of a freethinker. Religion was considered only as a means of governing the world. "I fear,"

said Erasmus in 1516, "that with the study of ancient literature, the olden paganism will reappear."

It is true that then, as after the ridicule of the Augustan age, and as even in our days after the sneers of the last century, a new Platonism arose and attacked this rash scepticism, and sought, like the philosophy of the present times, to inspire a certain degree of respect for Christianity, and to rekindle a religious feeling in the heart. The Medici at Florence encouraged these efforts of the Platonists. But no merely philosophical religion can ever regenerate the Church or the world. It may lose its strength in a kind of mystical enthusiasm; but as it is supercilious, and despises the preaching of the cross of Christ, pretending to see in the Gospel doctrines little else but figures and symbols, incomprehensible to the majority of mankind, it will ever be powerless to reform and save.

What then would have been the result, had real Christianity not reappeared in the world, and if faith had not once more filled all hearts with its own strength and holiness? The Reformation preserved both religion and society. If the Church of Rome had had God's glory and the welfare of the people at heart, she would have welcomed the Reformation with joy. But what was this to a Leo the Tenth?

And yet a torch could not be lighted in Italy without its rays shining beyond the Alps. The affairs of the Church kept up a continual intercourse between this peninsula and the other parts of Christendom. The barbarians felt erelong the superiority and superciliousness of the Italians, and began to be ashamed of their defects of language and of style. A few young noblemen, such as Dalberg, Langen, and Spiegelberg, burning with the desire of knowledge, visited Italy, and brought back to Germany and imparted to their friends the learning, the grammar, and the classic authors they so much desired. Soon there appeared a man of distinguished talents, Rodolph Agricola, whose learning and genius won for him as great veneration as if he had lived in the age of Augustus or of Pericles. The ardour of his mind and the fatigues of the school wore him out in a few years; but in the intercourse of private life he had trained up noble disciples, who carried their master's zeal over all Germany.

Often when assembled around him had they deplored the darkness of the Church, and asked why St. Paul so frequently repeats that men are justified by faith and not by works At the feet of these new teachers was soon gathered a youthful but rude band of scholars, living upon alms, studying without books; and who, divided into societies of priests of Bacchus, arquebusiers, and others, passed in disorderly troops from town to town, and from school to school. No matter; these strange companies were the beginning of a literary public. Gradually the masterpieces of antiquity

issued from the German presses and supplanted the schoolmen; and the art of printing, discovered at Mentz in 1440, multiplied the voices that boldly remonstrated against the corruptions of the Church, and those not less powerful, which invited the human mind into new paths of inquiry.

The study of ancient literature produced very different effects in Germany from those which followed it in Italy and in France: it was there combined with faith. The Germans immediately looked for the advantage that might accrue to religion from these new literary pursuits. What had produced in Italian minds little more than a minute and barren refinement of the understanding, pervaded the whole being of the Germans, warmed their hearts, and prepared them for a brighter light. The first restorers of learning in Italy and in France were remarkable for their levity, and frequently also for their immorality. Their successors in Germany, animated by a serious feeling, zealously went in search of truth. Italy, offering up her incense to literature and profane learning, beheld the rise of a sceptical opposition. Germany, occupied with deep theological questions, and thrown back upon herself, saw the rise of an opposition based on faith. In the one country the foundations of the Church were undermined; in the other they were re-established on their true basis. A remarkable society was formed in the empire, composed of liberal, generous-minded, and learned men, who counted princes among their number, and who endeavoured to make learning profitable to religion. Some brought to their studies the humble faith of children; others, an enlightened and penetrating intellect, inclined perhaps to overstep the bounds of legitimate freedom and criticism: yet both contributed to clear the entrance of the temple from the superstitions that had encumbered it.

The monkish theologians perceived their danger, and began to clamour against these very studies which they had tolerated in Italy and France, because they had there gone hand in hand with frivolity and profligacy. A conspiracy was formed amongst them against literature and science, for behind them faith was seen advancing. A monk, cautioning a person against the heresies of Erasmus, was asked in what they consisted. He acknowledged that he had not read the work of which he was speaking, and could only say that "it was written in too pure Latinity."

The disciples of learning and the scholastic divines soon came to open war. The latter beheld with alarm the movement that was taking place in the realms of intellect, and thought that immobility and darkness would be the surest guardians of the Church. It was to save Rome that they opposed the revival of letters; but in this they contributed to its fall. Rome herself had a great share in producing this result. Momentarily led astray under the pontificate of Leo X, she deserted her old friends, and clasped her young adversaries in her arms. Popery and learning formed an

alliance that seemed likely to dissolve the union between the monastic orders and the hierarchy. The popes did not at the first glance perceive that what they had taken for a plaything was in reality a sword that might cause their death. In like manner, during the last century, princes were seen welcoming to their courts political and philosophical principles which, had they yielded to all their influences, would have overturned their thrones. Such an alliance was not of long duration. Learning went forward, without a care as to what might endanger the power of its patron. The monks and schoolmen were well aware that to desert the pope would be to abandon themselves: and the pope, notwithstanding the brief patronage he accorded to the fine arts, was not less active, when he saw the danger, in taking measures the most contrary to the spirit of the times.

The universities defended themselves, as best they could, against the intrusion of this new light. Rhagius was expelled from Cologne, Celtes from Leipsic, and Hermann von dem Busch from Rostock. Still the new doctors, and the ancient classics with them, gradually established themselves, and frequently with the aid of the ruling princes, in these superior academies. In despite of the schoolmen, societies of grammarians and of poets were soon formed in them. Everything was to be converted into Greek and Latin, even to their very names. How could the admirers of Sophocles and of Virgil be known by such barbarous appellations as Krachenberger of Schwarzerd? At the same time a spirit of independence spread through the universities. The students were no longer seen in seminarist fashion, with their books under their arms, walking demurely, respectfully, and with downcast eyes, behind their masters. The petulance of Martial and of Ovid had passed into these new disciples of the Muses. They hailed with transport the ridicule heaped on the dialectic theologians; and the heads of the literary movement were sometimes accused of favouring, and even of exciting, the disorderly proceedings of the scholars.

Thus a new world, sprung out of antiquity, had arisen in the midst of the world of the Middle Ages. The two parties could not avoid coming to blows: struggle was at hand. It was the mildest champion of literature, an old man drawing near the close of his peaceful career, who was to begin the conflict.

In order that the truth might prove triumphant, it was necessary first that the weapons by which she was to conquer should be brought forth from the arsenals where they had lain buried for ages. These weapons were the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. It was necessary to revive in Christendom the love and the study of sacred Greek and Hebrew learning. The man whom the providence of God selected for this task was named John Reuchlin.

The sweet voice of a child had been remarked in the choir of the church at Pforzheim, and had attracted the notice of the Margrave of Baden. It was that of John Reuchlin, a boy of agreeable manners and lively disposition, the son of a worthy burgess of that town. The margrave soon showed him especial favour, and made choice of him in 1473 to accompany his son Frederick to the university of Paris.

The son of the usher of Pforzheim, in transports of joy, arrived with the prince at this school, then the most celebrated of the West. Here he found the Spartan Hermonymos and John Wessel, the light of the world; and had now an opportunity of studying Greek and Hebrew under able masters of which languages there was at that time no professor in Germany, and of which he was one day to be the restorer in the home of the Reformation. The young and indigent German transcribed for richer students the rhapsodies of Homer and the orations of Isocrates, gaining thus the means of prosecuting his own studies and of purchasing books.

But he heard other things from the mouth of Wessel, that made a deep impression on his mind. "The popes may err. All human satisfactions are blasphemy against Christ, who has reconciled and completely justified the human race. To God alone belongs the power of giving plenary absolution. It is not necessary to confess our sins to the priest. There is no purgatory unless it be God himself, who is a devouring fire, and who cleanseth from all impurity."

Reuchlin had barely attained the age of twenty years, when he taught philosophy and Greek and Latin at Basle; and—what then passed for a miracle—a German was heard speaking Greek.

The partisans of Rome began to feel uneasy, when they saw these generous spirits searching into the ancient treasures. "The Romans make wry faces," said Reuchlin, "and cry out, pretending that all these literary pursuits are contrary to the Romish piety, because the Greeks are schismatics. Oh! what toil and suffering must be undergone to restore wisdom and learning to Germany!"

Not long after, Eberhard of Wurtemberg invited Reuchlin to Tubingen to adorn that rising university. In 1483, he took him with him into Italy. Chalcondylas, Aurispa, and John Pico of Mirandola, were his friends and companions at Florence. At Rome, when Eberhard had a solemn audience of the pope, surrounded by his cardinals, Reuchlin delivered an address in such pure and elegant Latinity, that the assembly, who expected nothing of the kind from a barbarous German, was filled with astonishment, and the pontiff exclaimed: "This man certainly deserves to rank with the best orators of France and Italy."

Ten years later Reuchlin was compelled to take refuge at Heidelberg, at the court of the Elector Philip, to escape the vengeance of Eberhard's successor. Philip, in conjunction with John of Dalberg, bishop of Worms, his friend and chancellor, endeavoured to diffuse the light that was beginning to dawn in every part of Germany. Dalberg had founded a library, which was open to all the learned. On this new stage Reuchlin made great efforts to destroy the barbarism of his countrymen.

Having been sent by the elector in 1498 on an important mission to Rome, he employed all the time and money he could spare, either in improving himself in the Hebrew language under the learned Israelite, Abdias Sphorna, or in purchasing all the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts he could find, with a view of employing them as so many torches to increase in his own country the light which was already beginning to appear.

Argyropolos, an illustrious Greek, was then at Rome explaining to a numerous auditory the ancient marvels of his national literature. The learned ambassador proceeded with his attendants to the hall where this doctor was lecturing, and on his entrance saluted the master, and deplored the misfortunes of Greece, then expiring under the blows of the Ottomans. The astonished scholar asked his visiter, "Where do you come from, and do you understand Greek?" Reuchlin answered, "I am a German, and I am not entirely ignorant of your language." At the request of Argyropolos, he read and explained a passage from Thucydides, which the professor happened to have before him. Upon this Argyropolos, struck with astonishment and grief, exclaimed, "Alas! alas! the fugitive and exiled Greece has gone to hide herself beyond the Alps!"

It was thus that the sons of barbarous Germany and of ancient and learned Greece met in the palaces of Rome; thus the East and the West embraced in this resort of the world, and the one poured into the lap of the other those intellectual treasures which it had snatched from the barbarism of the Ottomans. God, whenever his plans require it, brings together in an instant, by some great catastrophe, the things which seemed destined to remain for ever separated.

Reuchlin, on his return to Germany, was able to take up his residence again at Wurtemberg. It was at this time he accomplished those labours that were so useful to Luther and to the Reformation. This man, who, as Count Palatine, occupied a distinguished place in the empire, and who, as philosopher, contributed to lower Aristotle and exalt Plato, drew up a Latin dictionary which superseded those of the Schoolmen; wrote a Greek grammar which greatly facilitated the study of that

language; translated and explained the Penitential Psalms; corrected the Vulgate; and—which is his chief merit and glory—was the first to publish in Germany a Hebrew grammar and dictionary. Reuchlin by this labour reopened the long-sealed books of the old covenant, and thus raised, as he says himself, "a monument more durable than brass."

But Reuchlin endeavoured to promote the cause to truth as much by his life as by his writings. By his lofty stature, his commanding person, and his engaging address, he immediately gained the confidence of all with whom he had to deal. His thirst for knowledge was only equalled by his zeal in communicating what he had learnt. He spared neither money nor labour to introduce into Germany the editions of the classic writers as they issued from the Italian presses; and thus the usher's son did more to enlighten his fellow country-men than rich corporations or mighty princes. His influence over youth was very extensive; and who can estimate all that the Reformation owes to him in that respect? We will mention only one instance. His cousin, a young man, the son of a skilful and celebrated armourer named Schwarzerd, came to reside with his sister Elisabeth, in order to study under his direction. Reuchlin, delighted at beholding the genius and industry of his youthful scholar, adopted him as his son. Good advice, presents of books, example,—nothing was spared to make his relative useful to the Church and to his country. He was charmed at seeing the work prosper under his eyes; and finding the German name of Schwarzerd too harsh, he translated it into Greek, according to the fashion of the times, and named the young student Melancthon. This was the illustrious friend of Luther.

But grammatical studies could not satisfy Reuchlin. Imitating his Jewish teachers, he began to study the mystic meaning of the Word. "God is a spirit," said he, "the Word is a breath, man breathes, God is the Word. The names which He has given to himself are an echo of eternity." He thought with the Cabalists that man can ascend from symbol to symbol, and from form to form to the last and purest of all forms,—to that which regulates the kingdom of the spirit.

While Reuchlin was bewildering himself in these peaceful and abstract researches, the hostility of the schoolmen, suddenly and very much against his will, forced him into a violent contest that was one of the preludes to the Reformation.

There dwelt at Cologne one Pfefferkorn, a baptised rabbi, and intimately connected with the inquisitor Hochstraten. This man and the Dominicans solicited and obtained from the Emperor Maximilian—perhaps with very good intentions—an order by virtue of which the Jews were to bring all their Hebrew books (the Bible only

excepted) to the townhall of the place in which they resided. Here these writings were to be burnt. The motive put forward was, that they were full of blasphemies against Jesus Christ. It must be acknowledged they were at least full of absurdities, and that the Jews themselves would have been no great losers by the proposed measure.

The emperor invited Reuchlin to give his opinion upon these works. The learned doctor particularly singled out the books written against Christianity, leaving them to their destined fate; but he endeavoured to save the rest. "The best way to convert the Israelites," added he, "would be to establish two professors of the Hebrew language in each university, who should teach the theologians to read the Bible in Hebrew, and thus to refute the Jewish doctors." In consequence of this advice the Jews had their books restored to them.

The proselyte and the inquisitor, like hungry ravens who see their prey escaping them, raised a furious clamour. They picked out different passages from Reuchlin's work, perverted their meaning, declared the author a heretic, accused him of a secret inclination to Judaism, and threatened him with the dungeons of the Inquisition. Reuchlin at first gave way to alarm; but as these men became daily more insolent, and prescribed disgraceful conditions, he published in 1513 a "Defence against his Cologne Slanderers," in which he described the whole party in the liveliest colours.

The Dominicans swore to be avenged, and hoped by a stroke of authority, to uphold their tottering power. Hochstraten had a tribunal formed at Mentz against Reuchlin, and the writings of this learned man were committed to the flames. Then the innovators, the masters and disciples of the new school, feeling themselves all attacked in the person of Reuchlin, rose up like one man. The times were changed: Germany and literature were not Spain and the Inquisition. This great literary movement had called a public opinion into existence. Even the superior clergy were almost entirely gained over to it. Reuchlin appealed to Leo X. This pope, who was no friend to the ignorant and fanatical monks, referred the whole matter to the Bishop of Spires, who declared Reuchlin innocent, and condemned the monks to pay the expenses of the investigation. The Dominicans, those stanch supporters of the Papacy, had recourse in their exasperation to the infallible decrees of Rome; and Leo X, not knowing how to act between these two hostile powers, issued a mandate de supersedendo.

This union of learning with faith is one of the features of the Reformation, and distinguished it both from the establishment of Christianity and from the religious revivals of the present day. The Christians contemporary with the Apostles had against them all the refinement of their age; and, with very few exceptions, it is the same with those of our times. The majority of learned men were with the reformers.

Even public opinion was favourable to them. The work thus gained in extent; but perhaps it lost in depth.

Luther, acknowledging all that Reuchlin had done, wrote to him shortly after his victory over the Dominicans: "The Lord has been at work in you, that the light of Holy Scripture might begin to shine in that Germany where for so many ages, alas! it was not only stifled but entirely extinct."

CHAPTER 8

Erasmus—Erasmus a Canon—At Paris—His Genius—His Reputation—His Influence—Popular Attack—Praise of Folly—Gibes—Churchmen—Saints—Folly and the Popes—Attack on Science—Principles—Greek New Testament—His Profession of Faith—His Labours and Influence—His Failings—Two Parties—Reform without Violence—Was such possible?—Unreformed Church—His Timidity—His Indecision—Erasmus loses his Influence with all Parties

One man—the great writer of the opposition at the beginning of the sixteenth century—had already appeared, who considered it as the grand affair of his life to attack the doctrines of the schools and of the convents.

Reuchlin was not twelve years old when this great genius of the age was born. A man of no small vivacity and wit, named Gerard, a native of Gouda in the Low Countries, loved a physician's daughter. The principles of Christianity did not govern his life, or at least his passions silenced them. His parents and his nine brothers urged him to embrace a monastic life. He fled from his home, leaving the object of his affections on the point of becoming a mother, and repaired to Rome. The frail Margaret gave birth to a son. Gerard was not informed of it; and sometime after he received from his parents the intelligence that she whom he had loved was no more. Overwhelmed with grief, he entered the priesthood, and devoted himself entirely to the service of God. He returned to Holland: Margaret was still living! She would not marry another, and Gerard remained faithful to his sacerdotal vows. Their affection was concentrated on their son. His mother had taken the tenderest care of him: the father, after his return, sent him to school, although he was only four years old. He was not yet thirteen, when his teacher, Sinthemius of Deventer, one day embraced him with rapture, exclaiming, "This child will attain the highest pinnacle of learning! It was Erasmus of Rotterdam.

About this time his mother died, and not long after his broken-hearted father followed her to the grave.

The youthful Erasmus was now alone. He entertained the greatest dislike for a monastic life, which his guardians urged him to embrace, but to which, from his very birth, we might say, he had been opposed. At last, he was persuaded to enter a convent of canons regular, and scarcely had he done so when he felt himself oppressed by the weight of his vows. He recovered a little liberty, and we soon find him at the court of the Archbishop of Cambray, and somewhat later at the university of Paris. He there pursued his studies in extreme poverty, but with the most indefatigable

industry. As soon as he could procure any money, he employed it in purchasing—first, Greek works, and then clothes. Frequently did the indigent Hollander solicit in vain the generosity of his protectors; and hence, in afterlife, it was his greatest delight to furnish the means of support to youthful but poor students. Engaged without intermission in the pursuit of truth and of knowledge, he reluctantly assisted in the scholastic disputes, and shrank from the study of theology, lest he should discover any errors in it, and be in consequence denounced as a heretic.

It was at this period that Erasmus became conscious of his powers. In the study of the ancients he acquired a correctness and elegance of style, that placed him far above the most eminent scholars of Paris. He began to teach; and thus gained powerful friends. He published some writings, and was rewarded by admiration and applause. He knew the public taste, and shaking off the last ties of the schools and of the cloister, he devoted himself entirely to literature, displaying in all his writings those shrewd observations, that clear, lively, and enlightened wit which at once amuse and instruct.

The habit of application, which he contracted at this period, clung to him all his life: even in his journeys, which were usually on horseback, he was not idle. He used to compose on the road, while riding across the country, and as soon as he reached the inn, committed his thoughts to writing. It was thus he composed his celebrated Praise of Folly, in a journey from Italy to England.

Erasmus early acquired a great reputation among the learned: but the exasperated monks vowed deadly vengeance against him. Courted by princes, he was inexhaustible in finding excuses to escape from their invitations. He preferred gaining his living with the printer Frobenius by correcting books, to living surrounded with luxury and favours in the splendid courts of Charles V, Henry VIII, or Francis I, or to encircling his head with the cardinal's hat that was offered him.

Henry the Eighth having ascended the throne in 1509, Lord Mountjoy invited Erasmus, who had already been in England, to come and cultivate literature under the sceptre of their Octavius. In 1510 he lectured at Cambridge, maintaining with Archbishop Warham, John Colet, and Sir Thomas More, those friendly relations which continued until their death. In 1516 he visited Basle, where he took up his abode in 1521.

What was his influence on the Reformation?

It has been overrated by one party, and depreciated by another. Erasmus never was, and never could have been a reformer; but he prepared the way for others. Not only did he diffuse over his age a love of learning, and a spirit of inquiry and examination that led others much farther than he went himself;—but still more under the protection of great prelates and powerful princes, he was able to unveil and combat the vices of the Church by the most cutting satires.

Erasmus, in fact, attacked the monks and the prevailing abuses in two ways. He first adopted a popular method. This fair little man, whose half-closed blue eyes keenly observed all that was passing,— on whose lips was ever a slight sarcastic smile,—whose manner was timid and embarrassed,—and whom, it seemed, that a puff of wind would blow down,—scattered in every direction his elegant and biting sarcasms against the theology and devotion of his age. His natural character and the events of his life had rendered this disposition habitual. Even in those writings where we should have least expected it, his sarcastic humour suddenly breaks out, and he immolated, as with needlepoints, those schoolmen and those ignorant monks against whom he had declared war. There are many points of resemblance between Voltaire and Erasmus. Preceding authors had already popularised the idea of that element of folly which has crept into all the opinions and actions of human life.

Erasmus seized upon it, and introduced Folly in her own person, Moria, daughter of Plutus, born in the Fortunate Isles, fed on drunkenness and impertinence, and queen of a powerful empire. She gives a description of it. She depicts successively all the states in the world that belong to her, but she dwells particularly on the churchmen, who will not acknowledge her benefits, though she loads them with her favours. She overwhelms with her gibes and sarcasms that labyrinth of dialectics in which the theologians had bewildered themselves, and those extravagant syllogisms, by which they pretended to support the Church. She unveils the disorders, ignorance, filthy habits, and absurdities of the monks.

"They all belong to me," says she, "those folks whose greatest pleasure is in relating miracles, or listening to marvellous lies, and who makes use of them in an especial manner to beguile the dullness of others, and to fill their own purses (I speak particularly of priests and preachers)! In the same category are those who enjoy the foolish but sweet persuasion that if they chance to see a piece of wood or a picture representing Polyphemus or Christopher, they will not die that day."

"Alas! what follies," continues Moria; "I am almost ashamed of them myself! Do we not see every country claiming its peculiar saint? Each trouble has its saint, and every saint his candle. This cures the toothache; that assists women in childbed; a

third restores what a thief has stolen; a fourth preserves you in shipwreck; and a fifth protects your flocks. There are some who have many virtues at once, and especially the Virginmother of God, in whom the people place more confidence than in her Son.. If in the midst of all these mummeries some wise man should rise and give utterance to these harsh truths: 'You shall not perish miserably if you live like Christians;—you shall redeem your sins, if to your alms you add repentance, tears, watchings, prayer, fasting, and a complete change in your way of life;—this saint will protect you, if you imitate his conduct;'—If, I say, some wise man should charitably utter these things in their ears, oh! of what happiness would he not rob their souls, and into what trouble, what distress would he not plunge them! The mind of man is so constituted that imposture has more hold upon it than truth. If there is one saint more apocryphal than another—a St. George, St. Christopher, or St. Barbara—you will see him worshipped with greater fervency than St. Peter, St. Paul, or even than Christ himself."

But Moria does not stop here: she attacks the bishops "who run more after gold than after souls, and who think they have done enough for Jesus Christ, when they take their seats complacently and with theatrical pomp, like Holy Fathers to whom adoration belongs, and utter blessings or anathemas." The daughter of the Fortunate Isles even ventures to attack the Court of Rome and the pope himself, who, passing his time in amusements, leaves the duties of his ministry to St. Peter and St. Paul. "Can there be any greater enemies to the Church than these unholy pontiffs, who by their silence allow Jesus Christ to be forgotten; who bind him by their mercenary regulations; who falsify his doctrine by forced interpretations; and crucify him a second time by their scandalous lives?"

Holbein added the most grotesque illustrations to the Praise of Folly, in which the pope figured with his triple crown. Perhaps no work has ever been so thoroughly adapted to the wants of the age. It is impossible to describe the impression this little book produced throughout Christendom. Twenty-seven editions appeared in the lifetime of Erasmus: it was translated into every European language, and contributed more than any other to confirm the anti-sacerdotal tendency of the age.

But to the popular attack of sarcasm Erasmus united science and learning. The study of Greek and Latin literature had opened a new prospect to the modern genius that was beginning to awaken from its slumber in Europe. Erasmus eagerly embraced the idea of the Italians that the sciences ought to be studied in the schools of the ancients, and that, laying aside the inadequate and absurd works that had hitherto been in use, men should study geography in Strabo, medicine in Hippocrates, philosophy in Plato, mythology in Ovid, and natural history in Pliny. But he went a

step further, and it was the step of a giant, and must necessarily have led to the discovery of a new world of greater importance to the interests of humanity than that which Columbus had recently added to the old. Erasmus, following out his principle, required that men should no longer study theology in Scotus and Aquinas, but go and learn it in the writings of the Fathers of the Church, and above all in the New Testament. He showed that they must not even rest contented with the Vulgate, which swarmed with errors; and he rendered an incalculable service to truth by publishing his critical edition of the Greek text of the New Testament—a text as little known in the West as if it had never existed. This work appeared at Basle in 1516, one year before the Reformation. Erasmus thus did for the New Testament what Reuchlin had done for the Old. Henceforward divines were able to read the Word of God in the original languages, and at a later period to recognise the purity of the Reformed doctrines.

"It is my desire," said Erasmus, on publishing his New Testament, "to lead back that cold disputer of words, styled theology, to its real fountain. Would to God that this work may bear as much fruit to Christianity as it has cost me toil and application!" This wish was realised. In vain did the monks cry out, "He presumes to correct the Holy Ghost!" The New Testament of Erasmus gave out a bright flash of light. His paraphrases on the Epistles, and on the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. John; his editions of Cyprian and Jerome; his translations of Origen, Athanasius, and Chrysostom; his Principles of True Theology, his Preacher, and his Commentaries on various Psalms, contributed powerfully to diffuse a taste for the Word of God and for pure theology. The result of his labours even went beyond his intentions. Reuchlin and Erasmus gave the Bible to the learned; Luther, to the people.

Erasmus did still more: by his restoration of the New Testament, he restored what that revelation taught. "The most exalted aim in the revival of philosophical studies," said he, "will be to obtain a knowledge of the pure and simple Christianity of the Bible." A noble sentiment! and would to God that the organs of our modern philosophy understood their mission as well as he did! "I am firmly resolved," said he again, "to die in the study of the Scriptures; in them are all my joy and all my peace." "The sum of all christian philosophy," said he on another occasion, "amounts to this:—to place all our hopes in God alone, who by his free grace, without any merit of our own, gives us everything through Christ Jesus; to know that we are redeemed by the death of his Son; to be dead to worldly lusts; and to walk in conformity with his doctrine and example, not only injuring no man, but doing good to all; to support our trials patiently in the hope of a future reward; and finally, to claim no merit to ourselves on account of our virtues, but to give thanks to God for all our strength and

for all our works. This is what should be instilled into man, until it becomes a second nature."

Then raising his voice against that mass of churchregulations about dress, fasting, feastdays, vows, marriage, and confession, which oppressed the people and enriched the priests, Erasmus exclaims: "In the churches they scarcely ever think of explaining the Gospel. The greater part of their sermons must be drawn up to please the commissaries of indulgences. The most holy doctrine of Christ must be suppressed or perverted to their profit. There is no longer any hope of cure, unless Christ himself should turn the hearts of rulers and of pontiffs, and excite them to seek for real piety."

The writings of Erasmus followed one another in rapid succession. He laboured unceasingly, and his works were read just as they came from his pen. This animation, this native energy, this intellect so rich and so delicate, so witty and so bold, that was poured without any reserve in such copious streams upon his contemporaries, led away and enchanted the immense public who devoured the works of the philosopher of Rotterdam. He soon became the most influential man in Christendom, and crowns and pensions were showered upon him from every side.

If we cast our eyes on the great revolution that somewhat later renewed the Church, we cannot help acknowledging that Erasmus served as a bridge to many minds. Numbers who would have been alarmed by the evangelical truths presented in all their strength and purity, allowed themselves to be drawn along by him, and ultimately became the most zealous partisans of the Reformation.

But the very circumstances that fitted him for the work of preparation, disqualified him for its accomplishment.

"Erasmus is very capable of exposing error," said Luther, "but he knows not how to teach the truth." The Gospel of Christ was not the fire at which he kindled and sustained his energy,—the centre whence his activity radiated. He was in an eminent degree a man of learning, and only in consequence of that was he a Christian. He was too much the slave of vanity to acquire a decided influence over his age. He anxiously calculated the result that each step he took might have upon his reputation. There was nothing he liked better than to talk about himself and his fame. "The pope," wrote he with a childish vanity to an intimate friend, at the period when he declared himself the opponent of Luther, "the pope has sent me a diploma full of kindness and honourable testimonials. His secretary declares that this in an unprecedented honour, and that the pope dictated every word himself."

Erasmus and Luther, viewed in connection with the "Reformation, are the representatives of two great ideas,—of two great parties in their age, and indeed in every age. The one composed of men of timid prudence; the other, of men of resolution and courage. These two parties were in existence at that epoch, and they are personified in their illustrious chiefs. The men of prudence thought that the study of theological science would gradually bring about a reformation of the Church, and that, too, without violence. The men of action thought that the diffusion of more correct ideas among the learned would not put an end to the superstitions of the people, and that the correction of this or of that abuse, so long as the whole life of the Church was not renewed, would be of little effect.

"A disadvantageous peace," Erasmus used to say, "is better than the most righteous war." He thought—and how many Erasmuses have lived since, and are living even in our own days! he thought that a reformation which might shake the Church would endanger its overthrow; he witnessed with alarm men's passions aroused into activity; evil everywhere mixed up with the little good that might be effected; existing institutions destroyed without the possibility of others being set up in their place; and the vessel of the Church, leaking on every side, at last swallowed up by the tempest. "Those who bring the sea into new beds," said he, "often attempt a work that deceives their expectations; for the terrible element, once let in, does not go where they would with it, but rushes whithersoever it pleases, and causes great devastation." "Be that as it may," added he, "let troubles be everywhere avoided! It is better to put up with ungodly princes than to increase the evil by any change."

But the courageous portion of his contemporaries were prepared with an answer. History had sufficiently proved that a free exposition of the truth and a decided struggle against falsehood could alone ensure the victory. If they had temporised, the artifices of policy and the wiles of the papal court would have extinguished the truth in its first glimmerings. Had not conciliatory measures been employed for ages? Had not council after council been convoked to reform the Church? All had been unavailing. Why now pretend to repeat an experiment that had so often failed?

Undoubtedly a thorough reform could not be accomplished without violence. But when has anything good or great ever appeared among men without causing some agitation? Would not this fear of seeing evil mingled with good, even had it been reasonable, have checked the noblest and the holiest undertakings? We must not fear the evil that may arise out of a great agitation, but we must take courage to resist and to overcome it.

Is there not besides an essential difference between the commotion originating in human passions, and that which emanates from the Spirit of God? One shakes society, the other strengthens it. What an error to imagine with Erasmus that in the then existing state of Christendom,—with that mixture of contrary elements, of truth and falsehood, life and death—a violent collision could be prevented! As well strive to close the crater of Vesuvius when the angry elements are already warring in its bosom! The Middle Ages had seen more than one violent commotion, when the sky was less threatening with storms than at the time of the Reformation. Men had not then to think of checking and of repressing, but of directing and guiding.

Who can tell what frightful ruin might not have occurred if the Reformation had not burst forth? Society, the prey of a thousand elements of destruction, destitute of any regenerating or conservative qualities, would have been terribly convulsed. Certainly this would have really been a reform in Erasmus's fashion, and such as many moderate but timid men of our days still dream of, which would have overturned christian society. The people, wanting that knowledge and that piety which the Reformation brought down even to the lowest ranks, abandoned to their violent passions, and to a restless spirit of revolt, would have been let loose, like a furious and exasperated wild beast, whose rage no chains can any longer control.

The Reformation was no other than an interposition of the Spirit of God among men,—a regulating principle that God sent upon earth. It is true that it might stir up the fermenting elements hidden in the heart of man; but God overruled them. The evangelical doctrines, the truth of God, penetrating the masses of the people, destroyed what was destined to perish, but everywhere strengthened what ought to be maintained. The effect of the Reformation on society was to reconstruct; prejudice alone could say that it was an instrument of destruction. It has been said with reason, with reference to the work of reform, that "the ploughshare might as well think that it injures the earth it breaks up, while it is only fertilizing it."

The leading principle of Erasmus was: "Give light, and the darkness will disappear of itself." This principle is good, and Luther acted upon it. But when the enemies of the light endeavour to extinguish it, or to wrest the torch from the hand of him who bears it, must we (for the sake of peace) allow him to do so? must we not resist the wicked?

Erasmus was deficient in courage. Now, that quality is as indispensable to effect a reformation as to take a town. There was much timidity in his character. From his early youth he trembled at the name of death. He took the most extraordinary care of his health. He spared no sacrifice to remove from a place in which a contagious

malady was reigning. The desire of enjoying the comforts of life exceeded even his vanity, and this was his motive for rejecting more than one brilliant offer.

He had, therefore, no claims to the character of a reformer. "If the corrupted morals of the court of Rome call for a prompt and vigorous remedy, that is no business of mine," said he, "nor of those who are like me." He had not that strength of faith which animated Luther. While the latter was ever prepared to lay down his life for the truth, Erasmus candidly observed, "Let others aspire the martyrdom: as for me, I do not think myself worthy of such an honour. I fear that if any disturbance were to arise, I should imitate Peter in his fall."

By his conversation and by his writings Erasmus had prepared the way for the Reformation more than any other man; and yet he trembled when he saw the approach of that very tempest which he himself had raised. He would have given anything to restore the calm of former times, even with all its dense vapors. But it was too late: the dike was broken. It was no longer in man's power to arrest the flood that was at once to cleanse and fertilise the world. Erasmus was powerful as God's instrument; when he ceased to be that, he was nothing.

Ultimately Erasmus knew not what party to adopt. None pleased him, and he feared all. "It is dangerous to speak," said he, "and it is dangerous to be silent." In every great religious movement there will be found these wavering characters,—respectable on many accounts, but injurious to the truth, and who, from their unwillingness to displease any, offend all.

What would have become of the Truth, had not God raised up more courageous champions than Erasmus? Listen to the advice he gives Viglius Zuichem, who was afterwards president of the supreme court at Brussels, as to the manner in which he should behave towards the sectarians—for thus he had already begun to denominate the Reformers: "My friendship for you leads me to desire that you will keep aloof from the contagion of the sects, and that you will give them no opportunity of saying, Zuichem is become one of us. If you approve of their teaching, you should at least dissemble, and, above all, avoid discussions with them. A lawyer should finesse with these people, as the dying man did with the devil, who asked him, What do you believe? The poor man, fearful of being caught in some heresy, if he should make a confession of his faith, replied, What the Church believes. The devil demanded, And what does the Church believe?—What I believe.—Once more he was questioned, What do you believe?—and the expiring man answered once more, What the Church believes!" Thus Duke George of Saxony, Luther's mortal enemy, having received an equivocal answer to a question he had put to Erasmus, said to him: "My dear Erasmus, wash

me the fur without wetting it!" Secundus Curio, in one of his works, describes two heavens—the papal and the christian. He found Erasmus in neither, but discovered him revolving between both in never-ending orbits.

Such was Erasmus. He needed that inward emancipation which alone gives perfect liberty. How different would he have been had he abandoned self, and sacrificed all for truth! But after having endeavoured to effect certain reforms with the approbation of the heads of the Church; after having deserted the Reformation for Rome, when he saw that these two things could not go hand in hand;—he lost ground with all parties. On the one side, his recantations could not repress the anger of the fanatical partisans of the papacy: they felt all the evil he had done them, and would not pardon him. Furious monks loaded him with abuse from the pulpits: they called him a second Lucian—a fox that had laid waste the Lord's vineyard. A doctor of Constance had hung the portrait of Erasmus in his study, that he might be able at any moment to spit in his face.—But, on the other hand, Erasmus, deserting the standard of the Gospel, lost the affection and esteem of the noblest men of the age in which he lived, and was forced to renounce, there can be little doubt, those heavenly consolations which God sheds in the heart of those who act as good soldiers of Christ. This at least seems to be indicated by those bitter tears, those painful vigils, that broken sleep, that tasteless food, that loathing of the study of the Muses (formerly his only consolation), those saddened features, that pale face, those sorrowful and downcast eyes, that hatred of existence which he calls "a cruel life," and those longings after death, which he describes to his friends. Unhappy Erasmus!

The enemies of Erasmus went, in my opinion, a little beyond the truth, when they exclaimed on Luther's appearance: "Erasmus laid the egg, and Luther hatched it."

CHAPTER 9

The Nobility—Different Motives—Hutten—Literary League—Literae Obscurorum Virorum—Their Effect—Luther's Opinion—Hutten at Brussels—His Letters—Sickingen—War—His Death—Cronberg—Hans Sachs—General Ferment

The same symptoms of regeneration that we have seen among princes, bishops, and learned men, were also found among men of the world,—among nobles, knights, and warriors. The German nobility played an important part in the Reformation. Several of the most illustrious sons of Germany formed a close alliance with the men of letters, and inflamed by an ardent, frequently by an excessive zeal, they strove to deliver their country from the Roman yoke.

Various causes contributed to raise up friends to the Reformation among the ranks of the nobles. Some having frequented the universities, had there received into their bosoms the fire with which the learned were animated. Others, brought up in generous sentiments, had hearts predisposed to receive the glorious lessons of the Gospel. Many discovered in the Reformation a certain chivalrous character that fascinated them and carried them along with it. And others, we must freely acknowledge, were offended with the clergy, who, in the reign of Maximilian, had powerfully contributed to deprive them of their ancient independence, and bring them under subjection to their princes. They were full of enthusiasm, and looked upon the Reformation as the prelude to a great political renovation; they saw in imagination the empire emerging with new splendour from this crisis, and hailed a better state, brilliant with the purest glory, that was on the eve of being established in the world, not less by the swords of the knights than by the Word of God.

Ulrich of Hutten, who has been called the German Demosthenes, on account of his philippics against the Papacy, forms, as it were, the link that unites the knights with the men of letters. He distinguished himself by his writings not less than by his sword. Descended from an ancient Franconian family, he was sent at the age of eleven years to the convent of Foulda, in which he was to become a monk. But Ulrich, who felt no inclination for this profession, ran away from the convent at sixteen, and repaired to the university of Cologne, where he devoted himself to the study of languages and poetry. Somewhat later he led a wandering life, and was present, as a common soldier at the siege of Padua in 1513, beheld Rome and all her scandalous abuses, and there sharpened those arrows which he afterwards discharged against her.

On his return to Germany, Hutten composed a treatise against Rome, entitled "The Roman Trinity." In this work he unveils the disorders of the papal court, and points out the necessity of putting an end to her tyranny by force. "There are three things," says a traveller named Vadiscus, who figures in the treatise,—"there are three things that are usually brought away from Rome: a bad conscience, a disordered stomach, and an empty purse. There are three things in which Rome does not believe: the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the dead, and hell. There are three things in which Rome traffics: the grace of Christ, ecclesiastical dignities, and women." The publication of this work compelled Hutten to leave the court of the Archbishop of Mentz, where he had composed it.

Reuchlin's affair with the Dominicans was the signal that brought together all the men of letters, magistrates, and nobles, who were opposed to the monks. The defeat of the inquisitors, who, it was said, had escaped a definite and absolute condemnation only by means of bribery and intrigue, had emboldened their adversaries. Councillors of the empire; patricians of the most considerable cities,—Pickheimer of Nuremberg, Peutinger of Augsburg, and Stuss of Cologne; distinguished preachers, such as Capito and Oecolampadius; doctors of medicine and historians; all the literary men, orators, and poets, at whose head shone Ulrich of Hutten, composed that army of Reuchlinists, of which a list was even published. The most remarkable production of this learned league was the famous popular satire entitled—The Letters of Obscure Men. The principal authors of this work were Hutten, and Crotus Robianus, one of his college friends; but it is hard to say which of them first conceived the idea, even if it did not originate with the learned printer Angst, and if Hutten took any share in the first part of the work. Several humanists, assembled in the fortress of Ebernburg, appear to have contributed to the second. It is a bold sketch, a caricature often too rudely coloured, but full of truth and strength, of striking resemblance, and in characters of fire. Its effect was prodigious.

The monks, the adversaries of Reuchlin, the supposed writers of these letters, discuss the affairs of the day and theological matters after their own fashion and in barbarous latinity. They address the silliest and most useless questions to their correspondent Ortuin Gratius, professor at Cologne, and a friend of Pfefferkorn. With the most artless simplicity they betray their gross ignorance, incredulity, and superstition; their low and vulgar spirit; the coarse gluttony by which they make a god of their bellies; and at the same time their pride, and fanatical, persecuting zeal. They relate many of their droll adventures, of their excesses and profligacy, with various scandalous incidents in the lives of Hochstraten, Pfefferkorn, and other chiefs of their party. The tone of these letters—at one time hypocritical, at another quite childish—gives them a very comic effect: and yet the whole is so natural, that the

English Dominicans and Franciscans received the work with the greatest approbation, and thought it really composed on the principles and in the defence of their orders. A certain prior of Brabant, in his credulous simplicity, even purchased a great number of copies, and sent them as presents to the most distinguished of the Dominicans.

The monks, more and more exasperated, applied to the pope for a severe bull against all who should dare to read these letters; but Leo X would not grant their request. They were forced to bear with the general ridicule, and to smother their anger. No work ever inflicted a more terrible blow on these supporters of the Papacy. But it was not by satire and by jests that the Gospel was to triumph. Had men continued walking in this path; had the Reformation had recourse to the jeering spirit of the world, instead of attacking error with the arms of God, its cause would have been lost.

Luther boldly condemned these satires. One of his friends having sent him The Tenour of Pasquin's Supplication, he replied, "The nonsense you have forwarded me seems to have been composed by an ill-regulated mind. I have communicated it to a circle of friends, and all have come to the same conclusion." And speaking of the same work, he writes to another correspondent: "This Supplication appears to me to have been written by the author of the Letters of Obscure Men. I approve of his design, but not of his work, since he cannot refrain from insults and abuse." This judgment is severe, but it shows Luther's disposition, and how superior he was to his contemporaries. We must add, however, that he did not always follow such wise maxims.

Ulrich having been compelled to resign the protection of the Archbishop of Mentz, sought that of Charles V, who was then at variance with the pope. He accordingly repaired to Brussels, where the emperor was holding his court. But far from obtaining anything, he learnt that the pope had called upon Charles to send him bound hand and foot to Rome. The inquisitor Hochstraten, Reuchlin's persecutor was one of those whom Leo X had charged to bring him to trial. Ulrich quitted Brabant in indignation at such a request having been made to the emperor. He had scarcely left Brussels, when he met Hochstraten on the highroad. The terrified inquisitor fell on his knees, and commended his soul to God and the saints. "No!" said the knight, "I will not soil my weapon with thy blood!" He gave him a few strokes with the flat of his sword, and allowed him to proceed in peace.

Hutten took refuge in the castle of Ebernburg, where Francis of Sickingen offered an asylum to all who were persecuted by the ultra-montanists. It was here that his

burning zeal for the emancipation of his country dictated those remarkable letters which he addressed to Charles V, to the Elector Frederick of Saxony, to Albert, archbishop of Mentz, and to the princes and nobles,—letters that place him in the foremost ranks of authorship. Here, too, he composed all those works intended to be read and understood by the people, and which inspired all the German states with horror of Rome, and with the love of liberty Ardently devoted to the cause of the Reformation, his design was to lead the nobles to take up arms in favour of the Gospel, and to fall with the sword upon that Rome which Luther aimed at destroying solely by the Word of God and by the invincible power of the truth.

Yet amidst all this warlike enthusiasm, we are charmed at finding in Hutten mild and delicate sentiments. On the death of his parents, he made over to his brothers all the family property, although he was the eldest son, and even begged them not to write to him or send him any money, lest, notwithstanding their innocence, they should be exposed to suffer by the malice of his enemies, and fall with him into the pit.

If Truth cannot acknowledge Hutten as one of her children, for her walk is ever with holiness of life and charity of heart, she will at least accord him honourable mention as one of the most formidable antagonists of error.

The same may be said of Francis of Sickingen, his illustrious friend and protector. This noble knight, whom many of his contemporaries judged worthy of the imperial crown, shines in the first rank among those warriors who were the adversaries of Rome. Although delighting in the uproar of battle, he was filled with an ardent love of learning and with veneration for its professors. When at the head of an army that menaced Wurtemberg, he gave orders that, in case Stuttgard should be taken by assault, the house and property of that great scholar, John Reuchlin, should be spared. Sickingen afterwards invited him to his camp, and embracing him, offered to support him in his quarrel with the monks of Cologne. For a long time chivalry had prided itself on despising literature. The epoch whose history we are retracing presents to us a new spectacle. Under the weighty cuirasses of the Huttens and Sickingens we perceive that intellectual movement which was beginning to make itself felt in every quarter. The first fruits that the Reformation gave to the world were warriors that were the friends of the peaceful arts.

Hutten, who on his return from Brussels had taken refuge in the castle of Sickingen, invited the worthy knight to study the evangelical doctrines, and explained to him the foundations on which they rest. “And is there any man,” asked

he in astonishment, "who dares attempt to overthrow such an edifice?...Who could do it?..."

Many individuals, who were afterwards celebrated as reformers, found an asylum in his castle; among others, Martin Bucer, Aquila, Schwebel, and Oecolampadius, so that Hutten with justice used to call Ebernburg "the resting-place of the righteous." It was the duty of Oecolampadius to preach daily in the castle. The warriors who were there assembled, at last grew weary of hearing so much said about the meek virtues of Christianity: the sermons appeared to them too long, however brief Oecolampadius endeavoured to be. They repaired, it is true, almost every day to the church, but it was for little else than to hear the benediction and to repeat a short prayer, so that Oecolampadius used to exclaim: "Alas! the Word of God is sown here upon stony ground!"

Erelong Sickingen, wishing to serve the cause of truth after his own fashion, declared war against the Archbishop of Treves, "in order," as he said, "to open a door for the Gospel." In vain did Luther, who had already appeared, strive to dissuade him from it: he attacked Treves with 5000 horse and 1000 foot. The courageous archbishop, with the aid of the Elector Palatine and the Landgrave of Hesse, compelled him to retire. In the following spring the allied princes attacked him in his castle of Landstein.

After a bloody assault, Sickingen was obliged to surrender: he had been mortally wounded. The three princes entered the fortress, and after searching through it, discovered the stout-hearted knight in a vault, lying on his bed of death. He stretched out his hand to the Elector Palatine, without seeming to notice the princes who accompanied him; but these overwhelmed him with questions and reproaches: "Leave me in repose," said he, "for I must now prepare to answer a more powerful lord than you!" When Luther heard of his death, he exclaimed: "The Lord is righteous and greatly to be praised! It is not by the sword that he will have his Gospel propagated."

Such was the melancholy end of a warrior, who, as elector or emperor, might perhaps have raised Germany to a high degree of glory; but who, confined within a narrow circle, wasted the great powers with which he had been endowed. But it was not in the tumultuous bosoms of these warriors that the divine truth, coming down from heaven, was to take up her abode. It was not by their arms that she was to prevail; and God, by bringing to nought Sickingen's mad projects, confirmed anew the testimony of St. Paul: The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God.

Another knight, Harmut of Cronberg, a friend of Hutten and Sickingen, appears to have had more wisdom and a deeper knowledge of the truth. He wrote with great modesty to Leo X, exhorting him to restore his temporal power to its rightful owner, namely, the emperor. Addressing his subjects as a father, he endeavoured to explain to them the doctrines of the Gospel, and exhorted them to faith, obedience, and trust in Jesus Christ, "who is the Lord of all," added he. He resigned into the Emperor's hand a pension of 200 ducats, "because he would no longer serve one who lent his ear to the enemies of the truth." We find an expression of his recorded that seems to place him far above Hutten and Sickingen: "Our heavenly teacher, the Holy Ghost, can, whenever he pleases, teach in one hour more of the faith that is in Christ Jesus, than could be learnt at the university of Paris in ten years."

Those who look for the friends of the Reformation only on the steps of thrones, or in cathedrals and in colleges, and who maintain that it had no friends among the people, are greatly mistaken. God, who was preparing the hearts of the wise and the powerful, was also preparing in the homes of the people many simple and humble-minded men, who were one day to become the ministers of his Word. The history of the period shows the ferment then agitating the lower orders. The tendency of popular literature before the Reformation was in direct opposition to the prevailing spirit of the Church. In the Eulenspiegel, a celebrated popular poem of the times, there is a perpetual current of ridicule against brutal and gluttonous priests, who were fond of pretty housekeepers, fine horses, and a wellfilled larder. In the Reynard Reineke, the priests' houses with their families of little children are a prominent feature; another popular writer thunders with all his might against those ministers of Christ who ride spirited horses, but who will not fight against the infidels; and John Rosenblut, in one of his carnival plays, introduces the Grand Turk in person to deliver a seasonable address to the states of Christendom.

It was in reality in the bosoms of the people that the revolution so soon to break forth was violently fermenting. Not only do we see youths issuing from their ranks and seizing upon the highest stations in the Church; but there are those who remained all their lives engaged in the humblest occupations, and yet powerfully contributing to the great revival of Christendom. We proceed to recall a few features in the life of one of these individuals.

Hans Sachs, son of a tailor of Nuremberg, was born on the 5th November 1494. He was named Hans (John) after his father, and had made some little progress in learning, when a severe malady compelled him to renounce his studies and take up the business of a shoemaker. Young Hans profited by the liberty which this humble trade allowed to his mind, to penetrate into that higher world in which his soul

delighted. The songs that had ceased to be heard in the castles of the nobles, sought and found an asylum among the inhabitants of the merry towns of Germany. A singing school was held in the church of Nuremberg. These exercises, in which Hans used to join, opened his heart to religious impressions, and helped to awaken in him a taste for poetry and music.

But the young man's genius could not long remain confined within the walls of his workshop. He wished to see with his own eyes that world of which he had read so much in books,—of which his comrades related so many stories,—and which his imagination peopled with wonders. In 1511, with a small bundle of necessaries, he sets out and directs his steps towards the south. Erelong the youthful traveller, who had met with jovial companions, students roaming from town to town, and with many dangerous temptations, feels a terrible struggle beginning with him.

The lusts of life and his holy resolutions are contending for the mastery. Trembling for the result, he takes flight and hides himself in the small town of Wels in Austria (1513), where he lived in retirement, devoting himself to the cultivation of the fine arts. The Emperor Maximilian chanced to pass through this town with a brilliant retinue, and the young poet allowed himself to be carried away by the splendour of the court. The prince placed him in his huntingtrain, and in the noisy halls of the palace of Inspruck, Hans again forgot all his resolutions. But his conscience once more cried aloud. Immediately the young huntsman lays aside his brilliant livery, quits the court, and repairs to Schwatz, and afterwards to Munich. It was in the latter town that, at the age of twenty years (1514), he composed his first hymn "in honour of God" to a remarkable air. He was covered with applause. During his travels he had had many opportunities of observing the numerous and melancholy proofs of the abuses under which religion was buried.

On his return to Nuremberg, Hans settled, married, and became a father. When the Reformation broke out, he lent an attentive ear. He clung to the Holy Scriptures, which were already dear to him as a poet, but in which he no longer sought merely for images and songs, but for the light of truth. To this truth erelong he consecrated his lyre, and from an humble workshop, near the gates of the imperial city of Nuremberg, issued tones that reechoed throughout Germany, preparing men's minds for a new era, and everywhere endearing to the people the mighty revolution that was going forward. The spiritual songs of Hans Sachs and his Bible in verse were a powerful help to this great work. It would, perhaps, be hard to decide who did the most for it—the Prince Elector of Saxony, administrator of the empire, or the Nuremberg shoemaker!

Thus, then, was there in every class something that announced the Reformation. Warnings appeared on every side, and events were hastening on which threatened to destroy the work of ages of darkness, and to "make all things new." The hierarchical form, which the efforts of many centuries had stamped upon the world, was shaken, and its fall was nigh. The light that had been just discovered spread a multitude of new ideas through every country with inconceivable rapidity. In every grade of society a new life was in motion. "What an age!" Exclaimed Hutten; "studies flourish—minds are awakening it is a joy merely to be alive!" Minds that had lain dormant for so many generations, seemed desirous of redeeming by their activity the time they had lost. To leave them unemployed, and without food, or to present them only with such as had long supported their languishing existence, would have betrayed ignorance of man's nature. Already did the human mind clearly perceive what was and what should be, and surveyed with a daring glance the immense gulf which separated these two worlds. Great princes filled the thrones; the timeworn colossus of Rome was tottering under its own weight; the ancient spirit of chivalry was dead, and its place supplied by a new spirit which breathed at once from the sanctuaries of learning and from the homes of the lowly. The printed Word had taken wings that carried it, as the wind wafts the light seed, even to the most distant places. The discovery of the two Indies extended the boundaries of the world. Everything announced a great revolution.

But whence is to proceed the blow that shall throw down the ancient building, and raise a new one from its ruins? No one knew. Who possessed greater wisdom than Frederick, greater learning than Reuchlin, greater talents than Erasmus, more wit and energy than Hutten, more valour than Sickingen, or was more virtuous than Cronberg? And yet it was not from Frederick, or Reuchlin, or Erasmus, or Hutten, or Sickingen, or Cronberg!... Learned men, princes, warriors, nay the Church itself—all had undermined some of the foundations; but there they had stopped. In no direction could be seen the powerful hand that was to be the instrument of God.

And yet all men had a presentiment that it would soon appear. Some pretended to have discovered in the stars unerring indications of its approach. Some, as they looked upon the miserable state of religion, foretold the near coming of Antichrist. Others, on the contrary, predicted a reformation to be close at hand. The world waited in expectation. Luther appeared.

Book 2—The Youth, Conversion, and Early Labours of Luther 1483-1517

CHAPTER 1

Luther's Descent—His Parents—His Birth—His Poverty—Paternal Home—Severity—First Knowledge—School of Magdeburg—Hardships—Eisenach—The Shunamite—House of Cotta—Arts—Recollections of these Times—His Studies—Trebonius—The University

All was ready. God who prepares his work through ages, accomplishes it by the weakest instruments, when His time is come. To effect great results by the smallest means—such is the law of God. This law, which prevails everywhere in nature, is found also in history. God selected the reformers of the Church from the same class whence he had taken the apostles. He chose them from among that lower rank, which, although not the lowest, does not reach the level of the middle classes. Everything was thus intended to manifest to the world that the work was not of man but of God. The reformer Zuingle emerged from an Alpine shepherd's hut; Melancthon, the theologian of the Reformation, from an armourer's shop; and Luther from the cottage of a poor miner.

The first period in man's life—that in which he is formed and moulded under the hand of God—is always important. It is eminently so in the career of Luther. The whole of the Reformation is included in it. The different phases of this work succeeded one another in the soul of him who was to be the instrument for effecting it, before they were accomplished in the world. The knowledge of the change that took place in Luther's heart can alone furnish the key to the reformation of the Church. It is only by studying the particulars that we can understand the general work. Those who neglect the former will be ignorant of the latter except in its outward appearance. They may acquire a knowledge of certain events and certain results, but they will never comprehend the intrinsic nature of that revival, because the principle of life, that was its very soul, remains unknown to them. Let us therefore study the Reformation in Luther himself, before we proceed to the events that changed the face of Christendom.

In the village of Mora, near the Thuringian forests, and not far from the spot where Boniface, the apostle of Germany, began to proclaim the Gospel, had dwelt, doubtless for many centuries, an ancient and numerous family of the name of Luther. As was customary with the Thuringian peasants, the eldest son always inherited the

dwelling and the paternal fields, while the other children departed elsewhere in quest of a livelihood. One of these, by name John Luther, married Margaret Lindemann, the daughter of an inhabitant of Neustadt in the see of Wurzburg. The married pair quitted the plains of Eisenach, and went to settle in the little town of Eisleben in Saxony, to earn their bread by the sweat of their brows.

Seckendorf relates, on the testimony of Rebhan, superintendent at Eisenach in 1601, that Luther's mother, thinking her time still distant, had gone to the fair of Eisleben, and that contrary to her expectation she there gave birth to a son. Notwithstanding the credit that is due to Seckendorf, this account does not appear to be correct: in fact, none of the oldest of Luther's historians mention it; and besides, it is about twenty-four leagues from Mora to Eisleben, and in the condition of Luther's mother at that time, people do not readily make up their minds to travel such a distance to see a fair; and, lastly, the evidence of Luther himself appears in direct opposition to this assertion.

John Luther was an upright man, diligent in business, frank, and carrying the firmness of his character even to obstinacy. With a more cultivated mind than that of most men of his class, he used to read much. Books were then rare; but John omitted no opportunity of procuring them. They formed his relaxation in the intervals of repose, snatched from his severe and constant labours. Margaret possessed all the virtues that can adorn a good and pious woman. Her modesty, her fear of God, and her prayerful spirit, were particularly remarked. She was looked upon by the matrons of the neighbourhood as a model whom they should strive to imitate.

It is not precisely known how long the married pair had been living at Eisleben, when, on the 10th of November, one hour before midnight, Margaret gave birth to a son. Melancthon often questioned his friend's mother as to the period of his birth. "I well remember the day and the hour," replied she, "but I am not certain about the year." But Luther's brother James, an honest and upright man, has recorded, that in the opinion of the whole family the future reformer was born on St. Martin's eve, 10th November, 1483. And Luther himself wrote on a Hebrew Psalter which is still in existence: "I was born in the year 1483." The first thought of his pious parents was to dedicate to God, according to the faith they professed, the child that he had given them. On the morrow, which happened to be Tuesday, the father carried his son to St. Peter's church, where he received the rite of Infant Baptism and was called Martin in commemoration of the day.

The child was not six months old, when his parents quitted Eisleben to repair to Mansfeldt, which is only five leagues distant. The mines of that neighbourhood were

then very celebrated. John Luther, who was a hardworking man, feeling that perhaps he would be called upon to bring up a numerous family, hoped to gain a better livelihood for himself and his children in that town. It was here that the understanding and strength of young Luther received their first development; here his activity began to display itself, and here his character was declared in his words and in his actions. The plains of Mansfeldt, the banks of the Wipper, were the theatre of his first sports with the children of the neighbourhood.

The first period of their abode at Mansfeldt was full of difficulty to the worthy John and his wife. At first they lived in great poverty. "My parents," said the Reformer, "were very poor. My father was a poor woodcutter, and my mother has often carried wood upon her back, that she might procure the means of bringing up her children. They endured the severest labour for our sakes." The example of the parents whom he revered, the habits they inspired in him, early accustomed Luther to labour and frugality. How many times, doubtless, he accompanied his mother to the wood, there to gather up his little faggot!

There are promises of blessing on the labour of the righteous, and John Luther experienced their realisation. Having attained somewhat easier circumstances, he established two smelting furnaces at Mansfeldt. Beside these furnaces little Martin grew in strength, and with the produce of this labour his father afterwards provided for his studies. "It was from a miner's family," says the good Mathesius, "that the spiritual founder of Christendom was to go forth: an image of what God would do in purifying the sons of Levi through him, and refining them like gold in his furnaces." Respected by all for his integrity, for his spotless life, and good sense, John Luther was made councillor of Mansfeldt, capital of the earldom of that name. Excessive misery might have crushed the child's spirit: the competence of his paternal home expanded his heart and elevated his character.

John took advantage of his new position to court the society which he preferred. He had a great esteem for learned men, and often invited to his table the clergy and schoolmasters of the place. His house offered a picture of those social meeting of his fellow-citizens, which did honour to Germany at the commencement of the sixteenth century. It was a mirror in which were reflected the numerous images that followed one another in the agitated scene of the times. The child profited by them. No doubt the sight of these men, to whom so much respect was shown in his father's house, excited more than once in little Martin's heart the ambitious desire of becoming himself one day a schoolmaster or a learned man.

As soon as he was old enough to receive instructions, his parents endeavoured to impart to him the knowledge of God, to train him up in His fear, and to mould him to christian virtues. They exerted all their care in this earliest domestic education. The father would often kneel at the child's bedside, and fervently pray aloud, begging the Lord that his son might remember His name and one day contribute to the propagation of the truth. The parent's prayer was most graciously listened to. And yet his tender solicitude was not confined to this.

His father, anxious to see him acquire the elements of that learning for which he himself had so much esteem, invoked God's blessing upon him, and sent him to school. Martin was still very young. His father, or Nicholas Emler, a young man of Mansfeldt, often carried him in their arms to the house of George Emilius, and afterwards returned to fetch him home. Emler in after-years married one of Luther's sisters.

His parents' piety, their activity and austere virtue, gave the boy a happy impulse, and formed in him an attentive and serious disposition. The system of education which then prevailed made use of chastisement and fear as the principal incentives to study.

Margaret, although sometimes approving to too great severity of her husband, frequently opened her maternal arms to her son to console him in his tears. Yet even she herself overstepped the limits of that wise precept: He that loveth his son, chasteneth him betimes. Martin's impetuous character gave frequent occasion for punishment and reprimand. "My parents," said Luther in afterlife, "treated me harshly, so that I became very timid. My mother one day chastised me so severely about a nut, that the blood came. They seriously thought that they were doing right; but they could not distinguish character, which however is very necessary in order to know when, or where, or how chastisement should be inflicted. It is necessary to punish; but the apple should be placed beside the rod."

At school the poor child met with treatment no less severe. His master flogged him fifteen times successively on one morning. "We must," said Luther, when relating this circumstance—"we must whip children, but we must at the same time love them." With such an education Luther learnt early to despise the charms of a merely sensual life. "What is to become great, should begin small," justly observes one of his oldest biographers; "and if children are brought up too delicately and with too much kindness from their youth, they are injured for life."

Martin learnt something at school. He was taught the heads of his Catechism, the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, some hymns, some

forms of prayer, and a Latin grammar written in the fourth century by Donatus who was St. Jeromes's master, and which, improved in the eleventh century by one Remigius, a French monk, was long held in great repute in every school. He further studied the calendar of Cisio Janus, a very singular work, composed in the tenth or eleventh century: in fine, he learnt all that could be taught in the Latin school of Mansfeldt.

But the child's thoughts do not appear to have been there directed to God. The only religious sentiment that could then be discovered in him was fear. Every time he heard Jesus Christ spoken of, he turned pale with affright; for the Saviour had only been represented to him as an offended judge. This servile fear—so alien to true religion—may perhaps have prepared him for the glad tidings of the Gospel, and for that joy which he afterwards felt, when he learnt to know Him who is meek and lowly in heart.

John Luther wished to make his son a scholar. The day that was everywhere beginning to dawn, had penetrated even into the house of the Mansfeldt miner, and there awakened ambitious thoughts. The remarkable disposition, the persevering application of his son, made John conceive the liveliest expectations. Accordingly, in 1497, when Martin had attained the age of fourteen years, his father resolved to part with him, and send him to the Franciscan school at Magdeburg. His mother was forced to consent, and Martin prepared to quit the paternal roof.

Magdeburg was like a new world to Martin. In the midst of numerous privations, for he scarcely had enough to live upon, he enquired—he listened. Andrew Proles, provincial of the Augustine order, was at that time warmly advocating the necessity of reforming religion and the Church. It was not he, however, who deposited in the young man's heart the first germ of the ideas that were afterwards developed there.

This was a rude apprenticeship for Luther. Thrown upon the world at the age of fourteen, without friends or protectors, he trembled in the presence of his masters, and in the hours of recreation he painfully begged his bread in company with children poorer than himself. "I used to beg with my companions for a little food," said he, "that we might have the means of providing for our wants. One day, at the time the Church celebrates the festival of Christ's nativity, we were wandering together through the neighbouring villages, going from house to house, and singing in four parts the usual carols on the infant Jesus, born at Bethlehem. We stopped before a peasant's house that stood by itself at the extremity of the village. The farmer, hearing us sing our Christmas hymns, came out with some victuals which he intended to give us, and called out in a high voice and with a harsh tone, Boys, where are you?

Frightened at these words, we ran off as fast as our legs would carry us. We had no reason to be alarmed, for the farmer offered us assistance with great kindness; but our hearts, no doubt, were rendered timorous by the menaces and tyranny with which the teachers were then accustomed to rule over their pupils, so that a sudden panic had seized us. At last, however, as the farmer continued calling after us, we stopped, forgot our fears, ran back to him, and received from his hands the food intended for us. It is thus," adds Luther, "that we are accustomed to tremble and flee, when our conscience is guilty and alarmed. In such a case we are afraid even of the assistance that is offered us, and of those who are our friends, and who would willingly do us every good."

A year had scarcely passed away, when John and Margaret, hearing what difficulty their son found in supporting himself at Magdeburg, sent him to Eisenach, where there was a celebrated school, and in which town they had many relatives. They had other children; and although their means had increased, they could not maintain their son in a place where he was unknown. The furnaces and the industry of John Luther did little more than provide for the support of his family. He hoped that when Martin arrived at Eisenach, he would more easily find the means of subsistence; but he was not more fortunate in this town. His relations who dwelt there took no care about him, or perhaps, being very poor themselves, they could not give him any assistance.

When the young scholar was pinched by hunger, he was compelled, as at Magdeburg, to join with his schoolfellows in singing from door to door to obtain a morsel of bread. This custom of Luther's days is still preserved in many German cities: sometimes the voices of the youths form an harmonious concert. Often, instead of food, the poor and modest Martin received nothing but harsh words. Then, overwhelmed with sorrow, he shed many tears in secret, and thought with anxiety of the future.

One day, in particular, he had already been repulsed from three houses, and was preparing to return fasting to his lodgings, when, having reached the square of St. George, he stopped motionless, plunged in melancholy reflections, before the house of a worthy citizen. Must he for want of bread renounce his studies, and return to labour with his father in the mines of Mansfeldt?... Suddenly a door opens—a woman appears on the threshold: it is Ursula, the wife of Conrad Cotta, and daughter of the burgomaster of Ilefeld. The Eisenach chronicles style her "the pious Shunamite," in remembrance of her who so earnestly constrained the prophet Elisha to stay and eat bread with her. The christian Shunamite had already more than once remarked the youthful Martin in the assemblies of the faithful; she had been affected by the sweetness of his voice and by his devotion. She had heard the harsh words that had

been addressed to the poor scholar, and seeing him stand thus sadly before her door, she came to his aid, beckoned him to enter, and gave him food to appease his hunger.

Conrad approved of his wife's benevolence: he even found so much pleasure in the boy's society, that a few days after he took him to live entirely with him. Henceforward his studies were secured. He is not obliged to return to the mines of Mansfeldt, and bury the talents that God has intrusted to him. At a time when he knew not what would become of him, God opened the heart and the house of a christian family. This event disposed his soul to that confidence in God which the severest trials could not afterwards shake.

Luther passed in Cotta's house a very different kind of life from that which he had hitherto known. His existence glided away calmly, exempt from want and care: his mind became more serene, his character more cheerful, and his heart more open. All his faculties awoke at the mild rays of charity, and he began to exult with life, joy, and happiness. His prayers were more fervent, his thirst for knowledge greater, and his progress in study more rapid.

To literature and science he added the charms of the fine arts; for they also were advancing in Germany. The men whom God destines to act upon their contemporaries, are themselves at first influenced and carried away by all the tendencies of the age in which they live. Luther learned to play on the flute and on the lute. With this latter instrument he used often to accompany his fine alto voice, and thus cheered his heart in the hours of sadness. He took delight in testifying by his melody his lively gratitude towards his adoptive mother, who was passionately fond of music. He himself loved the art even to old age, and composed the words and airs of some of the finest hymns that Germany possesses. Many have even passed into our language. These were happy times for young Luther: he could never think of them without emotion. One of Conrad's sons coming many years after to study at Wittenberg, when the poor scholar of Eisenach had become the first doctor of the age, was received with joy at his table and under his roof. He wished to make some return to the son for the kindness he had received from the parents. It was in remembrance of this christian woman who had fed him when all the world repulsed him, that he gave utterance to this beautiful thought:

"There is nothing sweeter on earth than the heart of a woman in which piety dwells."

Luther was never ashamed of these days in which, oppressed by hunger, he used in sadness to beg the bread necessary for his studies and his livelihood. Far from that,

he used to reflect with gratitude on the extreme poverty of his youth. He looked upon it as one of the means that God had employed to make him what he afterwards became, and he accordingly thanked him for it. The poor children who were obliged to follow the same kind of life, touched his heart. "Do not despise," said he, "the boys who go singing through the streets, begging a little bread for the love of God (panem propter Deum): I also have done the same. It is true that somewhat later my father supported me with much love and kindness at the university of Erfurth, maintaining me by the sweat of his brow; yet I have been a poor beggar. And now, by means of my pen, I have risen so high, that I would not change lots with the Grand Turk himself. Nay more, should all the riches of the earth be heaped one upon another, I would not take them in exchange for what I possess. And yet I should not be where I am, if I had not gone to school—if I had not learnt to write."—Thus did this great man see in these his first humble beginnings the origin of all his glory. He feared not to recall to mind that the voice whose accents thrilled the empire and the world, once used to beg for a morsel of bread in the streets of a small town. The Christian finds a pleasure in such recollections, because they remind him that it is in God alone he should glory.

The strength of his understanding, the liveliness of his imagination, the excellence of his memory, soon carried him beyond all his schoolfellows. He made rapid progress especially in Latin, in eloquence, and in poetry. He wrote speeches and composed verses. As he was cheerful, obliging, and had what is called "a good heart," he was beloved by his masters and by his schoolfellows.

Among the professors he attaches himself particularly to John Trebonius, a learned man, of an agreeable address, and who had all that regard for youth which is so well calculated to encourage them. Martin had noticed that whenever Trebonius entered the schoolroom, he raised his cap to salute the pupils. A great condescension in those pedantic times! This had delighted the young man. He saw that he was something. The respect of the master had elevated the scholar in his own estimation. The colleagues of Trebonius, who did not adopt the same custom, having one day expressed their astonishment at his extreme condescension, he replied (and his answer did not the less strike the youthful Luther): "There are among these boys men of whom God will one day make burgomasters, chancellors, doctors, and magistrates. Although you do not yet see them with the badges of their dignity, it is right that you should treat them with respect." Doubtless the young scholar listened with pleasure to these words, and perhaps imagined himself already with the doctor's cap upon his head!

CHAPTER 2

The University—Scholastic Divinity and the Classics—Luther's Piety—Discovery of the Bible—Illness—Luther admitted M.A.—Conscience—Death of Alexis—The Thunder Storm—Providence—Farewell—Luther enters a Convent

Luther had now reached his eighteenth year. He had tasted the sweets of literature; he burnt with a desire of knowledge; he sighed for a university education, and wished to repair to one of those fountains of learning where he could slake his thirst for letters. His father required him to study the law. Full of hope in the talents of his son, he wished that he should cultivate them and make them generally known. He already pictured him discharging the most honourable functions among his fellow-citizens, gaining the favour of princes, and shining on the theatre of the world. It was determined that the young man should go to Erfurth.

Luther arrived at this university in 1501. Jodocus, surnamed the Doctor of Eisenach, was teaching there the scholastic philosophy with great success. Melancthon regrets that at that time nothing was taught at Erfurth but a system of dialectics bristling with difficulties. He thinks that if Luther had met with other professors, if they had taught him the milder and calmer discipline of true philosophy, the violence of his nature might have been moderated and softened. The new disciple applied himself to study the philosophy of the Middle Ages in the works of Occam, Scotus, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas. In later times all this scholastic divinity was his aversion. He trembled with indignation whenever Aristotle's name was pronounced in his presence, and he went so far as to say that if Aristotle had not been a man, he should not have hesitated to take him for the devil. But a mind so eager for learning as his required other aliments; he began to study the masterpieces of antiquity, the writings of Cicero, Virgil, and other classic authors. He was not content, like the majority of students, with learning their productions by heart: he endeavoured to fathom their thoughts, to imbibe the spirit which animated them, to appropriate their wisdom to himself, to comprehend the object of their writings, and to enrich his mind with their pregnant sentences and brilliant images. He often addressed questions to his professors, and soon outstripped all his fellowstudents. Blessed with a retentive memory and a strong imagination, all that he read or heard remained constantly present to his mind; it was as if he had seen it himself. "Thus shone Luther in his early years. The whole university," says Melancthon, "admired his genius."

But even at this period the young man of eighteen did not study merely to cultivate his intellect: he had those serious thoughts, that heart directed heavenwards, which God gives to those of whom he resolves to make his most zealous ministers. Luther was sensible of his entire dependence upon God,—simple and powerful conviction, which is at once the cause of deep humility and of great actions! He fervently invoked the divine blessing upon his labours. Every morning he began the day with prayer; he then went to church, and afterwards applied to his studies, losing not a moment in the whole course of the day. "To pray well," he was in the habit of saying, "is the better half of study."

The young student passed in the university library all the time he could snatch from his academical pursuits. Books were as yet rare, and it was a great privilege for him to profit by the treasures brought together in this vast collection. One day—he had then been two years at Erfurth, and was twenty years old—he opens many books in the library one after another, to learn their writers' names. One volume that he comes to attracts his attention. He has never until this hour seen its like. He reads the title—it is a Bible! a rare book, unknown in those times. His interest is greatly excited: he is filled with astonishment at finding other matters than those fragments of the gospels and epistles that the Church has selected to be read to the people during public worship every Sunday throughout the year. Until this day he had imagined that they composed the whole Word of God. And now he sees so many pages, so many chapters, so many books of which he had had no idea! His heart beats, as he holds the divinely inspired volume in his hand. With eagerness and with indescribable emotion he turns over these leaves from God.

The first page on which he fixes his attention narrates the story of Hannah and of the young Samuel. He reads—and his soul can hardly contain the joy it feels. This child, whom his parents lend to the Lord as long as he liveth; the song of Hannah, in which she declares that Jehovah "raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes;" this child who grew up in the temple in the presence of the Lord; those sacrificers, the sons of Eli, who are wicked men, who live in debauchery, and "make the Lord's people to transgress;"—all this history, all this revelation that he has just discovered, excites feelings till then unknown. He returns home with a full heart. "Oh! that God would give me such a book for myself," thought he. Luther was as yet ignorant both of Greek and Hebrew. It is scarcely probable that he had studied these languages during the first two or three years of his residence at the university. The Bible that had filled him with such transports was in Latin. He soon returned to the library to pore over his treasure. He read it again and again, and then, in his astonishment and joy, he returned to read it

once more. The first glimmerings of a new truth were then beginning to dawn upon his mind.

Thus had God led him to the discovery of his Word—of that book of which he was one day to give his fellow countrymen that admirable translation in which Germany has for three centuries perused the oracles of God. Perhaps for the first time his precious volume has now been taken down from the place it occupied in the library of Erfurth. This book, deposited upon the unknown shelves of a gloomy hall, is about to become the book of life to a whole nation. In that Bible the Reformation lay hid.

It was in the same year that Luther took his first academical degree—that of bachelor.

The excessive labour to which he had devoted himself in order to pass his examination, occasioned a dangerous illness. Death seemed approaching him: serious reflections occupied his mind. He thought that his earthly existence was drawing to an end. The young man excited general interest. "It is a pity," they thought, "to see so many expectations so early blighted." Many friends came to visit him on his bed of sickness. Among their number was a venerable and aged priest, who had watched with interest the student of Mansfeldt in his labours and in his academic career. Luther could not conceal the thoughts that occupied his mind. "Soon," said he, "I shall be called away from this world." But the old man kindly replied, "My dear bachelor, take courage; you will not die of this illness. Our God will yet make of you a man who, in turn, shall console many. For God layeth his cross upon those whom he loveth, and they who bear it patiently acquire much wisdom." These words struck the young invalid. It was when he was so near death that he heard the voice of a priest remind him that God, as Samuel's mother said, raiseth up the miserable. The old man had poured sweet consolation into his heart, had revived his spirits; never will he forget it. "This was the first prediction that the worthy doctor heard," says Mathesius, Luther's friend, who records the fact, "and he often used to call it to mind." We may easily comprehend in what sense Mathesius calls these words a prediction.

When Luther recovered, there was a great change in him. The Bible, his illness, the words of the aged priest, seem to have made a new appeal to him: but as yet there was nothing decided in his mind. Another circumstance awakened serious thoughts within him. It was the festival of Easter, probably in the year 1503. Luther was going to pass a short time with his family, and wore a sword according to the custom of the age. He struck against it with his foot, the blade fell out, and cut one of the principal arteries. Luther, whose only companion had run off in haste to seek for assistance, finding himself alone, and seeing the blood flowing copiously without being able to

check it, lay down on his back, and put his finger on the wound; but the blood escaped in despite of his exertions, and Luther, feeling the approach of death, cried out, "O Mary, help me!" At last a surgeon arrived from Erfurth, who bound up the cut. The wound opened in the night, and Luther fainted, again calling loudly upon the Virgin. "At that time," said he in after-years, "I should have died relying upon Mary." Erelong he abandoned that superstition, and invoked a more powerful Saviour. He continued his studies. In 1505 he was admitted M.A. and doctor of philosophy. The university of Erfurth was then the most celebrated in all Germany. The others were but inferior schools in comparison with it. The ceremony was conducted, as usual, with great pomp. A procession by torchlight came to pay honour to Luther. The festival was magnificent. It was a general rejoicing. Luther, encouraged perhaps by these honours, felt disposed to apply himself entirely to the law, in conformity with his father's wishes.

But the will of God was different. While Luther was occupied with various studies, and beginning to teach the physics and ethics of Aristotle, with other branches of philosophy, his heart ceased not from crying to him that religion was the one thing needful, and that above all things he should secure his salvation. He knew the displeasure that God manifests against sin; he called to mind the penalties that his Word denounces against the sinner; and he asked himself, with apprehension, whether he was sure of possessing the divine favour. His conscience answered, No! His character was prompt and decided: he resolved to do all that might ensure him a firm hope of immortality. Two events occurred, one after the other, to disturb his soul, and to hasten his resolution.

Among his university friends was one named Alexis, with whom he lived in the closest intimacy. One morning a report was spread in Erfurth that Alexis had been assassinated. Luther hastens to ascertain the truth of this rumour. This sudden loss of his friend agitated him, and the question he asked himself, What would become of me, if I were thus called away without warning? fills his mind with the keenest terrors.

It was in the summer of the year 1505 that Luther, whom the ordinary university vacations left at liberty, resolved to go to Mansfeldt, to revisit the dear scenes of his childhood and to embrace his parents. Perhaps also he wished to open his heart to his father, to sound him on the plan that he was forming in his mind, and obtain his permission to engage in another profession. He foresaw all the difficulties that awaited him. The idle life of the majority of priests was displeasing to the active miner of Mansfeldt. Besides, the ecclesiastics were but little esteemed in the world; for the most part their revenues were scanty; and the father, who had made great sacrifices

to maintain his son at the university, and who now saw him teaching publicly in a celebrated school, although only in his twentieth year, was not likely to renounce the proud hopes he had cherished.

We are ignorant of what passed during Luther's stay at Mansfeldt. Perhaps the decided wish of his father made him fear to open his heart to him. He again quitted his father's house to take his seat on the benches of the academy. He was already within a short distance of Erfurth, when he was overtaken by a violent storm, such as often occurs in these mountains. The lightning flashed—the bolt fell at his feet. Luther threw himself upon his knees. His hour, perhaps, is come. Death, the judgment, and eternity summon him with all their terrors, and he hears a voice that he can no longer resist. "Encompassed with the anguish and terror of death," as he says himself, he made a vow, if the Lord delivers him from this danger, to abandon the world, and devote himself entirely to God. After rising from the ground, having still present to him that death which must one day overtake him, he examines himself seriously, and asks what he ought to do. The thoughts that once agitated him now return with greater force.

He has endeavoured, it is true, to fulfil all his duties, but what is the state of his soul? Can he appear before the tribunal of a terrible God with an impure heart? He must become holy. He has now as great a thirst for holiness, as he had formerly for knowledge. But where can he find it, or where can he attain it? The university provided him with the means of satisfying his first desires. Who shall calm that anguish—who shall quench the fire that now consumes him? To what school of holiness shall he direct his steps? He will enter a cloister: the monastic life will save him. Oftentimes has he heard speak of its power to transform the heart, to sanctify the sinner, to make man perfect! He will enter a monastic order. He will there become holy: thus will he secure eternal life.

Such was the event that changed the calling, the whole destiny of Luther. In this we perceive the finger of God. It was his powerful hand that on the highway cast down the young master of arts, the candidate for the bar, the future lawyer, to give an entirely new direction to his life. Rubianus, one of Luther's friends at the university of Erfurth, wrote thus to him in afterlife: "Divine Providence looked at what you were one day to become, when on your return from your parents, the fire from heaven threw you to the ground, like another Paul, near the city of Erfurth, and withdrawing you from our society, drove you into the Augustine order." Analogous circumstances have marked the conversion of the two greatest instruments that Divine Providence has made use of in the two greatest revolutions that have been effected upon the earth: Saint Paul and Luther.

Luther reenters Erfurth. His resolution in unalterable. Still it is not without a pang that he prepares to break the ties so dear to him. He communicates his intention to no one. But one evening he invites his university friends to a cheerful but frugal supper. Music once more enlivens their social meeting. It is Luther's farewell to the world. Henceforth, instead of these amiable companions of his pleasures and his studies, he will have monks; instead of this gay and witty conversation—the silence of the cloister; and for these merry songs—the solemn strains of the quiet chapel. God calls him, and he must sacrifice everything. Still, for the last time, let him share in the joys of his youth! The repast excites his friends: Luther himself is the soul of the party. But at the very moment that they are giving way without restraint to their gaiety, the young man can no longer control the serious thoughts that fill his mind. He speaks—he makes known his intention to his astonished friends. They endeavour to shake it, but in vain. And that very night Luther, fearful perhaps of their importunate solicitations, quits his lodgings. He leaves behind him all his clothes and books, taking with him only Virgil and Plautus; he had no Bible as yet. Virgil and Plautus! an epic poem and comedies! striking picture of Luther's mind! There had in effect taken place in him a whole epic—a beautiful, grand, and sublime poem; but as he had a disposition inclined to gaiety, wit, and humour, he combined more than one familiar feature with the serious and stately groundwork of his life.

Provided with these two books, he repairs alone, in the darkness of night, to the convent of the hermits of St. Augustine. He asks admittance. The gate opens and closes again. Behold him separated for ever from his parents, from the companions of his studies, and from the world! It was the 17th August 1505: Luther was then twenty-one years and nine months old.

CHAPTER 3

His Father's Anger—Pardon—Humiliations—The Sack and the Cell—Endurance—Luther's Studies—St. Augustine—Peter d'Ailly—Occam—Gerson—The chained Bible—Lyra—Hebrew and Greek—Daily Prayers—Asceticism—Mental Struggles—Luther during Mass—Useless Observances—Luther in a Faintingfit

Luther was with God at last. His soul was in safety. He was now about to find that holiness which he so much desired. The monks were astonished at the sight of the youthful doctor, and extolled his courage and his contempt of the world. He did not, however, forget his friends. He wrote to them, bidding farewell to them and to the world; and on the next day he sent these letters, with the clothes he had worn till then, and returned to the university his ring of master of arts, that nothing might remind him of the world he had renounced.

His friends at Erfurth were struck with astonishment. Must so eminent a genius go and hide himself in that monastic state, which is a partial death? Filled with the liveliest sorrow, they hastily repair to the convent, in the hope of inducing Luther to retrace so afflicting a step; but all was useless. For two whole days they surrounded the convent and almost besieged it, in the hope of seeing Luther come forth. But the gates remained closely shut and barred. A month elapsed without anyone being able to see or speak to the new monk.

Luther had also hastened to communicate to his parents the great change that had taken place in his life. His father was amazed. He trembled for his son, as Luther himself tells us in the dedication of his work on monastic vows addressed to his father. His weakness, his youth, the violence of his passions, all led John Luther to fear that when the first moment of enthusiasm was over, the idle habits of the cloister would make the young man fall either into despair or into some great sin. He knew that this kind of life had already been the destruction of many. Besides, the councillorminer of Mansfeldt had formed very different plans for his son. He had hoped that he would contract a rich and honourable marriage. And now all his ambitious projects are overthrown in one night by this imprudent step.

John wrote a very angry letter to his son, in which he spoke to him in a contemptuous tone, as Luther informs us, while he had addressed him always in a friendly manner after he had taken his Master of Arts degree. He withdrew all his favour, and declared him disinherited from his paternal affection. In vain did his father's friends, and doubtless his wife, endeavour to soften him; in vain did they say:

"If you would offer a sacrifice to God, let it be what you hold best and dearest,—even your son, your Isaac." The inexorable councillor of Mansfeldt would listen to nothing.

Not long after, however (as Luther tells us in a sermon preached at Wittenberg, 20th January 1544), the plague appeared, and deprived John Luther of two of his sons. About this time someone came and told the bereaved father the monk of Erfurth is dead also!...His friends seized the opportunity of reconciling the father to the young novice. "If it should be a false alarm," said they to him, "at least sanctify your affliction by cordially consenting to your son's becoming a monk!"—"Well! so be it!" replied John Luther, with a heart bruised, yet still half rebellious, "and God grant he may prosper!" Sometime after this, when Luther, who had been reconciled to his father, related to him the event that had induced him to enter a monastic order: "God grant," replied the worthy miner, "that you may not have taken for a sign from heaven what was merely a delusion of the devil."

There was not then in Luther that which was afterwards to make him the reformer of the Church. Of this his entrance into the convent is a strong proof. It was a proceeding in conformity with the tendencies of the age from which he was soon to contribute his endeavours to liberate the Church. He who was destined to become the great teacher of the world, was as yet its slavish imitator. A new stone had been added to the edifice of superstition by the very man who was erelong to destroy it. Luther looked to himself for salvation, to human works and observances. He knew not that salvation cometh wholly from God. He sought after his own glory and righteousness, unmindful of the righteousness and glory of the Lord. But what he was ignorant of as yet, he learnt soon after. It was in the cloister of Erfurth that this immense transformation was brought about, which substituted in his heart God and his wisdom for the world and its traditions, and that prepared the mighty revolution of which he was to be the most illustrious instrument.

When Martin Luther entered the convent, he changed his name, and assumed that of Augustine.

The monks had received him with joy. It was no slight gratification to their vanity to see one of the most esteemed doctors of the age abandon the university for a house belonging to their order. Nevertheless they treated him harshly, and imposed on him the worst occupations. They wished to humble the doctor of philosophy, and to teach him that his learning did not raise him above his brethren. They imagined, besides, by this means to prevent him from devoting himself so much to his studies, from which the convent could reap no advantage. The former master of arts had to perform the offices of porter, to open and shut the gates, to wind up the clock, to sweep

the church, and to clean out the cells. Then, when the poor monk, who was at once doorkeeper, sexton, and menial servant of the cloister, had finished his work: Cum sacco per civitatem! Away with your wallet through the town! cried the friars; and laden with his breadbag, he wandered through all the streets of Erfurth, begging from house to house, obliged perhaps to present himself at the doors of those who had once been his friends or his inferiors. On his return, he had either to shut himself up in a low and narrow cell, whence he could see nothing but a small garden a few feet square, or recommence his humble tasks. But he put up with all. Naturally disposed to devote himself entirely to whatever he undertook, he had become a monk with all his soul. Besides, how could he have a thought of sparing his body, or have had any regard for what might please the flesh? It was not thus that he could acquire the humility, the sanctity which he had come to seek within the walls of the cloister.

The poor monk, oppressed with toil hastened to employ in study all the moments that he could steal from these mean occupations. He voluntarily withdrew from the society of the brethren to give himself up to his beloved pursuits; but they soon found it out, and surrounding him with murmurs, tore him from his books, exclaiming, "Come, come! It is not by studying, but by begging bread, corn, eggs, fish, meat, and money that a monk renders himself useful to the cloister." Luther submitted: he laid aside his books, and took up his bag again. Far from repenting at having taken upon himself such a yoke, he is willing to go through with his task. It was then that the inflexible perseverance with which he always carried out the resolutions he had once formed, began to be developed in his mind. The resistance he made to these rude assaults gave a stronger temper to his will. God tried him in small things, that he might learn to remain unshaken in great ones. Besides, to be able to deliver his age from the miserable superstitions under which it groaned, it was necessary for him first to feel their weight. To drain the cup, he must drink it to the very dregs.

This severe apprenticeship did not however last so long as Luther might have feared. The prior of the convent, at the intercession of the university to which Luther belonged, freed him from the humiliating duties that had been laid upon him. The youthful monk then returned to his studies with new zeal. The works of the Fathers of the Church, especially of St. Augustine, attracted his attention. The exposition of the Psalms by this illustrious doctor, and his book On the letter and the Spirit, were his favourite study. Nothing struck him more than the sentiments of this Father on the corruption of man's will and on Diving Grace. He felt by his own experience the reality of that corruption and the necessity for that grace. The words of St. Augustine corresponded with the sentiments of his heart. If he could have belonged to any other school than that of Jesus Christ, it would undoubtedly have been to that of the doctor of Hippo. He almost knew by rote the works of Peter d'Ailly and of Gabriel Biel. He

was much taken with a saying of the former, that, if the Church had not decided to the contrary, it would have been preferable to concede that the bread and wine were really taken in the Lord's supper, and not mere accidents.

He also carefully studied the theologians Occam and Gerson, who both express themselves so freely on the authority of the popes. To this course of reading he added other exercises. He was heard in the public discussions unravelling the most complicated trains of reasoning, and extricating himself from a labyrinth whence none but he could have found an outlet. All his auditors were filled with astonishment.

But he had not entered the cloister to acquire the reputation of a great genius: it was to seek food for his piety. He therefore regarded these labours as mere digressions.

He loved above all things to draw wisdom from the pure source of the Word of God. He found in the convent a Bible fastened by a chain, and to this chained Bible he was continually returning. He had but little understanding of the Word, yet was it his most pleasing study. It sometimes happened that he passed a whole day meditating upon a single passage. At other times he learned fragments of the Prophets by heart. He especially desired to acquire from the writings of the Prophets and of the Apostles a perfect knowledge of God's will; to grow up in greater fear of His name; and to nourish his faith by the sure testimony of the Word.

It would appear that about this time he began to study the Scriptures in their original languages, and to lay the foundation of the most perfect and most useful of his labours—the translation of the Bible. He made use of Reuchlin's Hebrew Lexicon, that had just appeared. John Lange, one of the friars of the convent, a man skilled in Greek and Hebrew, and with whom he always remained closely connected, probably was his first instructor. He also made much use of the learned commentaries of Nicholas Lyra, who died in 1340. It was from this circumstance that Pflug, afterwards bishop of Naumburg, said: Si Lyra non lyrasset, Lutherus non saltasset.

The young monk studied with such industry and zeal that it often happened that he did not repeat the daily prayers for three or four weeks together. But he soon grew alarmed at the thought that he had transgressed the rules of his order. He then shut himself up to repair his negligence, and began to repeat conscientiously all the prayers he had omitted, without a thought of either eating or drinking. Once even, for seven weeks together, he scarcely closed his eyes in sleep.

Burning with desire to attain that holiness in quest of which he had entered the cloister, Luther gave way to all the rigor of an ascetic life. He endeavoured to crucify

the flesh by fasting, mortifications, and watching. Shut up in his cell, as in a prison, he struggled unceasingly against the deceitful thoughts and the evil inclinations of his heart. A little bread and a small herring were often his only food. Besides he was naturally of very abstemious habits. Thus he was frequently seen by his friends. Long after he had ceased to think of purchasing heaven by his abstinence, content himself with the poorest viands, and remain even four days in succession without eating or drinking. This we have on the testimony of Melancthon, a witness in every respect worthy of credit. We may judge from this circumstance of the little value we ought to attach to the fables that ignorance and prejudice have circulated as to Luther's intemperance.

At the period of which we are speaking, nothing was too great a sacrifice that might enable him to become a saint,—to acquire heaven. Never did the Romish church possess a more pious monk. Never did cloister witness more severe or indefatigable exertions to purchase eternal happiness. When Luther had become a reformer, and had declared that heaven was not to be obtained by such means as these, he knew very well what he was saying. "I was indeed a pious monk," wrote he to Duke George of Saxony, "and followed the rules of my order more strictly than I can express. If ever monk could obtain heaven by his monkish works, I should certainly have been entitled to it. Of this all the friars who have known me can testify. If it had continued much longer, I should have carried my mortifications even to death, by means of my watching, prayers, reading, and other labours."

We are approaching the epoch which made Luther a new man, and which, by revealing to him the infinity of God's love, put him in a condition to declare it to the world.

Luther did not find in the tranquillity of the cloister and in monkish perfection that peace of mind which he had looked for there. He wished to have the assurance of his salvation: this was the great want of his soul. Without it, there was no repose for him. But the fears that had agitated him in the world pursue him to his cell. Nay, they were increased. The faintest cry of his heart re-echoed loud beneath the silent arches of the cloister. God had led him thither, that he might learn to know himself, and to despair of his own strength and virtue. His conscience, enlightened by the Divine Word, told him what it was to be holy; but he was filled with terror at finding, neither in his heart nor in his life, that image of holiness which he had contemplated with admiration in the Word of God. A sad discovery, and one that is made by every sincere man! No righteousness within, no righteousness without! all was omission, sin, impurity! The more ardent the character of Luther, the stronger was that secret

and constant resistance which man's nature opposes to good; and it plunged him into despair.

The monks and divines of the day encouraged him to satisfy the divine righteousness by meritorious works. But what works, thought he, can come from a heart like mine? How can I stand before the holiness of my judge with works polluted in their very source? "I saw that I was a great sinner in the eyes of God," said he, "and I did not think it possible for me to propitiate him by my own merits."

He was agitated and yet dejected, avoiding the trifling and stupid conversation of the monks. The latter, unable to comprehend the storms that tosses his soul, looked upon him with surprise, and reproached him for his silence and his gloomy air. One day, Cochloeus tells us, as they were saying mass in the chapel, Luther had carried thither all his anxiety, and was in the choir in the midst of the brethren, sad and heart-stricken. Already the priest had prostrated himself, the incense had been burnt before the altar, the Gloria sung, and they were reading the Gospel, when the poor monk, unable any longer to repress his anguish, cried out in a mournful tone, as he fell on his knees, "It is not I—it is not I." All were thunderstruck: and the ceremony was interrupted for a moment. Perhaps Luther thought he heard some reproach of which he knew himself innocent; perhaps he declared his unworthiness of being one of those to whom Christ's death had brought the gift of eternal life. Cochloeus says, they were then reading the story of the dumb man's cry from whom Christ expelled a devil. It is possible that this cry of Luther, if the account be true, had reference to this circumstance, and that, although speechless like the dumb man, he protested by such an exclamation, that his silence came from other causes than demoniacal possession. Indeed, Cochloeus tells us that the monks sometimes attributed the sufferings of their brother to a secret intercourse with the devil, and this writer himself entertained that opinion.

A tender conscience inclined Luther to regard the slightest fault as a great sin. He had hardly discovered it, before he endeavoured to expiate it by the severest mortifications, which only served to point out to him the inutility of all human remedies. "I tortured myself almost to death," said he, "in order to procure peace with God for my troubled heart and agitated conscience; but surrounded with thick darkness, I found peace nowhere."

The practices of monastic holiness, which had lulled so many consciences to sleep, and to which Luther himself had had recourse in his distress, soon appeared to him the unavailing remedies of an empirical and deceptive religion. "While I was yet a monk, I no sooner felt assailed by any temptation than I cried out—I am lost!

Immediately I had recourse to a thousand methods to stifle the cries of my conscience. I went every day to confession, but that was of no use to me. Then bowed down by sorrow, I tortured myself by the multitude of my thoughts.—Look! exclaimed I, thou art still envious, impatient, passionate!...It profiteth thee nothing, O wretched man, to have entered this sacred order."

And yet Luther, imbued with the prejudices of his time, had from early youth considered the observances, whose worthlessness he had now discovered, as a certain remedy for diseased souls. What can he think of the strange discovery he has just made in the solitude of the cloister? It is possible, then, to dwell within the sanctuary, and yet bear in one's bosom a man of sin! He has received another garment, but not another heart. His expectations are disappointed. Where can he stop? Can all these rules and observances be mere human inventions? Such a supposition appears to him, at one time, a temptation of the devil, and at another, an irresistible truth. By turns contending with the holy voice that spake to his heart, and with the venerable institutions that time had sanctioned, Luther passed his life in a continual struggle. The young monk crept like a shadow through the long galleries of the cloister, that reechoed with his sorrowful moanings. His body wasted away; his strength began to fail him; it sometimes happened that he remained like one dead.

On one occasion, overwhelmed with sorrow, he shut himself up in his cell, and for several days and nights allowed no one to approach him. One of his friends, Lucas Edemberger, feeling anxious about the unhappy monk, and having a presentiment of the condition in which he was, took with him some boys who were in the habit of singing in the choirs, and knocked at the door of the cell. No one opens—no one answers. The good Edemberger, still more alarmed, breaks open the door. Luther lies insensible upon the floor, and giving no sign of life. His friend strives in vain to recall him to his senses: he is still motionless. Then the choristers begin to sing a sweet hymn. Their clear voices act like a charm on the poor monk,
to whom music was ever one of his greatest pleasures: gradually he recovers his strength, his consciousness, and life. But if music could restore his serenity for a few moments, he requires another and a stronger remedy to heal him thoroughly: he needs that mild and subtle sound of the Gospel, which is the voice of God himself. He knew it well. And therefore his troubles and his terrors led him to study with fresh zeal the writings of the prophets and of the apostles.

CHAPTER 4

Pious Monks—Staupitz—His Piety—Visitation—Conversations—The Grace of Christ—Repentance—Power of Sin—Sweetness of Repentance—Election—Providence—The Bible—The aged Monk—Forgiveness of Sins—Ordination—The Dinner—Festival of Corpus Christi—Luther made Professor at Wittenberg

Luther was not the first monk who had undergone such trials. The gloomy walls of the cloister often concealed the most abominable vices, that would have made every upright mind shudder, had they been revealed; but often also, they hid christian virtues that expanded there in silence, and which, had they been exposed to the eyes of the world, would have excited universal admiration. The possessors of these virtues, living only with themselves and with God, attracted no attention, and were often unknown to the modest convent in which they were enclosed: their lives were known only to God. Sometimes these humble solitaries fell into that mystic theology,—sad disease of the noblest minds! which in earlier ages had been the delight of the first monks on the banks of the Nile, and which unprofitably consumes the souls of those who become its victims.

Yet if one of these men was called to some high station, he there displayed virtues whose salutary influence was long and widely felt. The candle was set on a candlestick, and it illumined the whole house. Many were awakened by this light. Thus from generation to generation were these pious souls propagated; they were seen shining like isolated torches at the very times when the cloisters were often little other than impure receptacles of the deepest darkness.

A young man had been thus distinguished in one of the German convents. His name was John Staupitz, and he was descended from a noble Misnian family. From his tenderest youth he had had a taste for knowledge and a love of virtue. He felt the need of retirement to devote himself to letters. He soon discovered that philosophy and the study of nature could not do much towards eternal salvation. He therefore began to learn divinity; but especially endeavoured to unite practice with knowledge. "For," says one of his biographers, "it is in vain that we assume the name of divine, if we do not confirm that noble title by our lives." The study of the Bible and of the Augustine theology, the knowledge of himself, the battles that he, like Luther, had had to fight against the deceits and lusts of his heart, led him to the Redeemer. He found peace to his soul in faith in Christ. The doctrine of election by grace had taken strong hold of his mind. The integrity of his life, the extent of his knowledge, the eloquence of his speech, not less than a striking exterior and dignified manners, recommended him to his contemporaries. Frederick the Wise, elector of Saxony, made

him his friend, employed him in various embassies, and founded the university of Wittenberg under his direction. This disciple of St. Paul and St. Augustine was the first dean of the theological faculty of that school whence the light was one day to issue to illumine the schools and churches of so many nations. He was present at the Lateran council, as proxy of the Archbishop of Saltzburg, became provincial of his order in Thuringia and Saxony, and afterwards vicar-general of the Augustines for all Germany.

Staupitz was grieved at the corruption of morals and the errors of doctrine that were devastating the Church. His writings on the love of God, on christian faith, and on conformity with the death of Christ, and the testimony of Luther, confirm this. But he considered the former evil of more importance than the latter. Besides the mildness and indecision of his character, his desire not to go beyond the sphere of action he thought assigned to him, made him fitter to be the restorer of a convent than the reformer of the Church. He would have wished to raise none but distinguished men to important offices; but not finding them, he submitted to employ others. "We must plough," said he, "with such horses as we can find; and with oxen, if there are no horses."

We have witnessed the anguish and the internal struggles to which Luther was a prey in the convent of Erfurth. At this period a visitation of the vicar-general was announced. In fact, Staupitz came to make his usual inspection. The friend of Frederick, the founder of the university of Wittenberg, and chief of the Augustines, exhibited much kindness to those monks who were under his authority.

One of these brothers soon attracted his attention. He was a young man of middle height, whom study, fasting, and prolonged vigils had so wasted away that all his bones might be counted. His eyes, that in after-years were compared to a falcon's, were sunken; his manner was dejected; his countenance betrayed an agitated mind, the prey of a thousand struggles, but yet strong and resolute. His whole appearance was grave, melancholy, and solemn. Staupitz, whose discernment had been exercised by long experience, easily discovered what was passing in his mind, and distinguished the youthful monk above all who surrounded him. He felt drawn towards him, had a presentiment of his great destiny, and entertained quite a paternal interest for his inferior. He had had to struggle, like Luther, and therefore he could understand him. Above all, he could point out to him the road to peace, which he himself had found. What he learnt of the circumstances that had brought the young Augustine into the convent, still more increased his sympathy. He requested the prior to treat him with greater mildness, and took advantage of the opportunities afforded by his station to win the confidence of the youthful brother. Approaching him with affection, he

endeavoured by every means to dispel his timidity, which was increased by the respect and fear that a man of such exalted rank as Staupitz must necessarily inspire.

Luther's heart, which harsh treatment had closed till then, opened at last and expanded under the mild beams of charity. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." Luther's heart found an echo in that of Staupitz. The vicar-general understood him, and the monk felt a confidence towards him, that he had as yet experienced for none. He unbosomed to him the cause of his dejection, described the horrible thoughts that perplexed him, and then began in the cloister of Erfurth those conversations so full of wisdom and of instruction. Up to this time no one had understood Luther. One day, when at table in the refectory, the young monk, dejected and silent, scarcely touched his food. Staupitz, who looked earnestly at him, said at last, "Why are you so sad, brother Martin?"—"Ah!" replied he, with a deep sigh, "I do not know what will become of me!"—"These temptations," resumed Staupitz, "are more necessary to you than eating and drinking." These two men did not stop there; and erelong in the silence of the cloister took place that intimate intercourse, which powerfully contributed to lead forth the future reformer from his state of darkness. "It is in vain," said Luther despondingly to Staupitz, "that I make promises to God: sin is ever the strongest."

"O my friend!" replied the vicar-general, looking back on his own experience; "more than a thousand times have I sworn to our holy God to live piously, and I have never kept my vows. Now I swear no longer, for I know I cannot keep my solemn promises. If God will not be merciful towards me for the love of Christ, and grant me a happy departure, when I must quit this world, I shall never, with the aid of all my vows and all my good works, stand before him. I must perish."

The young monk is terrified at the thought of divine justice. He lays open all his fears to the vicar-general. He is alarmed at the unspeakable holiness of God and his sovereign majesty. "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" (Malachi 3:2.) Staupitz resumes: he knows where he had found peace, and he will point it out to the young man. "Why," said he, "do you torment yourself with all these speculations and these high thoughts? Look at the wounds of Jesus Christ, to the blood that he has shed for you: it is there that the grace of God will appear to you. Instead of torturing yourself on account of your sins, throw yourself into the Redeemer's arms. Trust in him—in the righteousness of his life—in the atonement of his death. Do not shrink back; God is not angry with you, it is you who are angry with God. Listen to the Son of God. He became man to give you the assurance of divine favour. He says to you, You are my sheep; you hear my voice; no man shall pluck you out of my hand." But Luther does not find in himself the

repentance which he thinks necessary for salvation: he replies, and it is the usual answer of distressed and timid minds: "How can I dare believe in the favour of God, so long as there is no real conversion in me? I must be changed, before he will accept me."

His venerable guide shows him that there can be no real conversion, so long as man fears God as a severe judge. "What will you say then," asks Luther "to so many consciences to which a thousand insupportable tasks are prescribed in order that they may gain heaven?"

Then he hears this reply of the vicar-general, or rather he does not believe that it comes from man: it seems to him like a voice from heaven. "There is no real repentance except that which begins with the love of God and of righteousness. What others imagine to be the end and accomplishment of repentance, is on the contrary only its beginning. In order that you may be filled with the love for God. If you desire to be converted, do not be curious about all these mortifications and all these tortures. Love him who first loved you!"

Luther listens—he listens again. These consolations fill him with joy till then unknown, and impart new light. "It is Jesus Christ," thinks he in his heart; "yes, it is Jesus Christ himself who so wonderfully consoles me by these sweet and healing words."

These words, indeed, penetrated to the bottom of the young monk's heart, like the sharp arrow of a strong man. In order to repent, we must love God. Guided by this new light, he begins to compare the Scriptures. He looks out all the passages that treat of repentance and conversion. These words, till then so dreaded, to use his own expression, "are become to him an agreeable pastime and the sweetest of recreations. All the passages of Scripture that used to alarm him, seem now to run to him from every part,—to smile and sport around him."

"Hitherto," exclaims he, "although I carefully dissembled the state of my soul before God, and endeavoured to express towards him a love which was a mere constraint and a fiction, there was no expression in Scripture so bitter to me as that of repentance. But now there is none so sweet or more acceptable. Oh! how delightful are all God's precepts when we read them not only in books, but also in our Saviour's precious wounds!"

Although Luther had been consoled by Staupitz' words, he nevertheless fell sometimes into despondency. Sin was again felt in his timid conscience, and then all

his previous despair banished the joy of salvation. "O my sin! my sin! my sin!" cried the young monk one day in the presence of the vicar-general, with a tone of profound anguish. "Well! would you only be a sinner in appearance," replied the latter, "and have also a Saviour only in appearance? Then," added Staupitz with authority, "Know that Jesus Christ is the Saviour even of those who are great, real sinners, and deserving of utter condemnation."

It was not alone the sin he discovered in his heart that agitated Luther; the troubles of his conscience were augmented by those of reason. If the holy precepts of the Bible alarmed him, some of the doctrines of that divine book still more increased his tortures. The Truth, which is the great medium by which God confers peace on man, must necessarily begin by taking away from him the false security that destroys him. The doctrine of Election particularly disturbed the young man, and launched him into a boundless field of inquiry. Must he believe that it was man who first chose God for his portion, or that God first elected man? The Bible, history, daily experience, the works of Augustine,—all had shown him that we must always and in every case ascend to that first cause, to that sovereign will by which everything exists, and on which everything depends. But his ardent spirit would have desired to go still further; he would have wished to penetrate into the secret counsels of God, unveiled his mysteries, seen the invisible, and comprehended the incomprehensible. Staupitz checked him. He told him not to presume to fathom the hidden God, but to confine himself to what he has manifested to us in Jesus Christ. "Look at Christ's wounds," said he, "and then will you see God's counsel towards man shine brightly forth. We cannot understand God out of Jesus Christ. In him, the Lord has said, you will find what I am, and what I require. Nowhere else, neither in heaven nor in earth, will you discover it."

The vicar-general did still more. He showed Luther the paternal designs of Providence in permitting these temptations and these various struggles that his soul was to undergo. He made him view them in a light well calculated to revive his courage. By such trials God prepares for himself the souls that he destines for some important work. We must prove the vessel before we launch it into the wide sea. If there is an education necessary for every man, there is a particular one for those who are destined to act upon their generation. This is what Staupitz represented to the monk of Erfurth. "It is not in vain," said he to him, "that God exercises you in so many conflicts: you will see that he will employ you, as his servant, for great purposes."

These words, to which Luther listened with astonishment and humility, inspired him with courage, and led him to discover strength in himself which he had not even suspected. The wisdom and prudence of an enlightened friend gradually revealed the

strong man to himself. Staupitz went further: he gave him many valuable directions for his studies, exhorting him, henceforward, to derive all his theology from the Bible, and to put away the systems of the schools. "Let the study of the Scriptures," said he, "be your favourite occupation." Never was good advice better followed out. What particularly delighted Luther, was the present Staupitz made him of a Bible: but it was not that Latin one, bound in red leather, the property of the convent, and which it was all his desire to possess, and to be able to carry about with him, because he was so familiar with its pages, and knew where to find each passage. Nevertheless, at length he is master of the treasure of God. Henceforward he studies the Scriptures, and especially the epistles of St. Paul, with everincreasing zeal. To these he adds the works of St. Augustine alone. All that he reads is imprinted deeply in his mind. His struggles have prepared his heart to understand the Word. The soil has been ploughed deep: the incorruptible seed sinks into it with power. When Staupitz quitted Erfurth, a new dawn had risen upon Luther.

But the work was not yet finished. The vicar-general had prepared the way: God reserved its accomplishment for an humbler instrument. The conscience of the young Augustine had not yet found repose. His body gave way at last under the conflict and the tension of his soul. He was attacked by an illness that brought him to the brink of the grave. This was in the second year of his abode in the convent. All his distresses and all his fears were aroused at the approach of death. His own impurity and the holiness of God again disturbed his mind. One day, as he lay overwhelmed with despair, an aged monk entered his cell, and addressed a few words of comfort to him. Luther opened his heart to him, and made known the fears by which he was tormented. The venerable old man was incapable of following up that soul in all its doubts, as Staupitz had done; but he knew his Credo, and had found in it much consolation to his heart.

He will therefore apply the same remedy to his young brother. Leading him back to that Apostles' creed which Luther had learnt in early childhood at the school of Mansfeldt, the aged monk repeated this article with kind goodnature: I believe in the forgiveness of sins. These simple words, which the pious brother pronounced with sincerity in this decisive moment, diffused great consolation in Luther's heart. "I believe," he repeated to himself erelong on his bed of sickness, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins!"—"Ah!" said the monk, "you must believe not only in the forgiveness of David's and of Peter's sins, for this even the devils believe. It is God's command that we believe our own sins are forgiven us." How delightful did this commandment seem to poor Luther! "Hear what St. Bernard says in his discourse on the Annunciation," added the aged brother: "The testimony of the Holy Ghost in thy heart is this: Thy sins are forgiven thee."

From this moment light sprung up in the heart of the young monk of Erfurth. The word of grace had been pronounced: he had believed in it. He disclaims all merit of salvation, and resigns himself confidingly to the grace of God in Jesus Christ. He does not at first perceive the consequences of the principle he has admitted; he is still sincere in his attachment to the Church, and yet he has no further need of her; for he has received salvation immediately from God himself, and henceforth Roman catholicism is virtually destroyed in him. He advances,—he seeks in the writings of the apostles and prophets for all that can strengthen the hope which fills his heart. Each day he invokes support from on high, and each day also the light increases in his soul.

Luther's mental health restored that of his body, and he soon rose from his bed of sickness. He had received a new life in a twofold scene. The festival of Christmas, that soon came, gave him an opportunity abundantly tasting all the consolations of faith. He took part in these holy solemnities with sweet emotion; and when in the ceremonial of the day he had to chant these words: O beata culpa quae talem meruisti Redemptorem! His whole being responded Amen, and thrilled with joy.

Luther had been two years in the cloister, and was to be ordained priest. He had received much, and saw with delight the prospect afforded by the sacerdotal office of freely distributing what he had freely received. He wished to take advantage of the ceremony that was about to take place to become thoroughly reconciled with his father. He invited him to be present, and even requested him to fix the day. John Luther, who was not yet entirely pacified with regard to his son, nevertheless accepted the invitation, and named Sunday, 2nd May, 1507.

Among the number of Luther's friends was the vicar of Eisenach, John Braun, who had been a faithful counsellor to him during his residence in that city. Luther wrote to him on the 22nd April. This is the oldest letter of the reformer, and it bears the following address: "To John Braun, holy and venerable priest of Christ and Mary." It is only in Luther's two earliest letters that the name of Mary is found.

"God, who is glorious and holy in all his works," says the candidate for the priesthood, "having most graciously condescended to raise me up—me, a wretched and in all respects unworthy sinner, and to call me by his sole and most free mercy to his sublime ministry; I ought, in order to testify my gratitude for such divine and magnificent goodness (as far at least as mere dust and ashes can do it) to fulfil with my whole heart the duties of the office intrusted to me."

At last the day arrived. The miner of Mansfeldt did not fail to be present at his son's ordination. He gave him indeed no unequivocal mark of his affection and of his generosity by presenting him on this occasion with twenty florins.

The ceremony took place. Hieronymus, bishop of Brandenburg, officiated. At the moment of conferring on Luther the power of celebrating mass, he placed the chalice in his hands, and uttered these solemn words, "Accipe potestatem sacrificandi pro vivis et mortuis: receive the power of sacrificing for the quick and the dead." Luther at that time listened calmly to these words, which conferred on him the power of doing the work of the Son of God; but he shuddered at them in after-years. "If the earth did not then open and swallow us both up," said he, "it was owing to the great patience and longsuffering of the Lord."

The father afterwards dined at the convent with his son, the young priest's friends, and the monks, The conversation fell on Martin's entrance into the monastery. The brothers loudly extolled it as a most meritorious work; upon which the inflexible John, turning to his son, asked him: "Have you not read in Scripture, that you should obey your father and mother?" These words struck Luther; they presented in quite a new aspect the action that had brought him into the bosom of the convent, and they long re-echoed in his heart.

Shortly after his ordination, Luther, by the advice of Staupitz, made little excursions on foot into the neighbouring parishes and convents, either to divert his mind and give his body the necessary exercise, or to accustom him to preaching.

The festival of Corpus Christi was to be celebrated with great pomp at Eisleben. The vicar-general would be present, and Luther repaired there also. He had still need of Staupitz, and sought every opportunity of meeting this enlightened guide who directed his soul into the path of life. The procession was numerous and brilliant. Staupitz himself bore the consecrated host, Luther following in his sacerdotal robes. The thought that it was Jesus Christ himself whom the vicar-general carried, the idea that the Saviour was there in person before him, suddenly struck Luther's imagination, and filled him with such terror that he could scarcely proceed. The perspiration fell drop by drop from his face; he staggered, and thought he should die of anguish and affright. At length the procession was over; the host, that had awakened all the fears of the monk, was solemnly deposited in the sanctuary; and Luther, finding himself alone with Staupitz, fell into his arms and confessed his dread. Then the good vicar-general, who had long known that gentle Saviour, who does not break the bruised reed, said to him mildly: "It was not Jesus Christ, my brother; he does not alarm; he gives consolation only."

Luther was not destined to remain hidden in an obscure convent. The time was come for his removal to a wider stage. Staupitz, with whom he always remained in close communication, saw clearly that the young monk's disposition was too active to be confined with so narrow a circle. He spoke of him to the Elector Frederick of Saxony: and this enlightened prince invited Luther in 1508, probably about the end of the year, to become professor at the university of Wittenberg. This was the field on which he was to fight many hard battles. Luther felt that his true vocation was there. He was requested to repair to his new post with all speed: he replied to the call without delay, and in the hurry of his removal he had not time to write to him whom he styled his master and well-beloved father,—John Braun, curate of Eisenach. He did so however a few months later. "My departure was so hasty," said he, "that those with whom I was living were almost ignorant of it. I am farther away, I confess: but the better part of me remains with you." Luther had been three years in the cloister at Erfurth.

CHAPTER 5

The University of Wittenberg—First Instructions—Biblical Lectures—Sensation—Luther preaches at Wittenberg—The Old Chapel—Impression produced by his Sermons

In the year 1502, Frederick the Elector founded a new university at Wittenberg. He declared in the charter confirming the privileges of this high school, that he and his people would look to it as to an oracle. At that time he had little thought in how remarkable a manner this language would be verified. Two men belonging to the opposition that had been formed against the scholastic system,— Pollich of Mellerstadt, doctor of medicine, law, and philosophy, and Staupitz—had had great influence in the establishment of this academy. The university declared that it selected St. Augustine for its patron,—a choice that was very significant. This new institution, which possessed great liberty, and which was considered as a court of final appeal in all cases of difficulty, was admirably fitted to become the cradle of the Reformation, and it powerfully contributed to the development of Luther and of Luther's work.

On his arrival at Wittenberg, he repaired to the Augustine convent, where a cell was allotted to him; for though a professor, he did not cease to be a monk. He had been called to teach physics and dialectics. In assigning him this duty, regard had probably been paid to the philosophical studies he had pursued at Erfurth, and to the degree of Master of Arts which he had taken. Thus Luther, who hungered and thirsted after the Word of God, was compelled to devote himself almost exclusively to the study of the Aristotelian scholastic philosophy. He had need of that bread of life which God gives to the world, and yet he must occupy himself with human subtleties. What a restraint! and what signs it called forth! "By God's grace, I am well," wrote he to Braun, "except that I have to study philosophy with all my might. From the first moment of my arrival at Wittenberg, I was earnestly desirous of exchanging it for that of theology; but," added he, lest it should be supposed he meant the theology of the day, "it is of a theology which seeks the kernel in the nut, the wheat in the husk, the marrow in the bones, that I am speaking. Be that as it may, God is God," continues he with that confidence which was the soul of his life; "man is almost always mistaken in his judgments; but this is our God. He will lead us with goodness for ever and ever." The studies that Luther was then obliged to pursue were of great service to him, in enabling him in after-years to combat the errors of the schoolmen.

But he could not stop there. The desire of his heart was about to be accomplished. That same power, which some years before had driven Luther from the bar into a

monastic life, was now impelling him from philosophy towards the Bible. He zealously applied himself to the acquisition of the ancient languages, and particularly of Greek and Hebrew, in order to draw knowledge and learning from the very springs whence they gushed forth. He was all his life indefatigable in labour. A few months after his arrival at the university, he solicited the degree of bachelor of divinity. He obtained it at the end of March 1509, with the particular summons to devote himself to biblical theology,—ad Biblia.

Every day, at one in the afternoon, Luther was called to lecture on the Bible: a precious hour both for the professor and his pupils, and which led them deeper and deeper into the divine meaning of those revelations so long lost to the people and to the schools!

He began his course by explaining the Psalms, and thence passed to the Epistle to the Romans. It was more particularly while meditating on this portion of Scripture, that the light of truth penetrated his heart. In the retirement of his quiet cell, he used to consecrate whole hours to the study of the Divine Word, this epistle of St. Paul lying open before him. On one occasion, having reached the seventeenth verse of the first chapter, he read this passage from the prophet Habakkuk: The just shall live by faith. This precept struck him. There is then for the just a life different from that of other men: and this life is the gift of faith. This promise, which he received into his heart, as if God himself had placed it there, unveils to him the mystery of the christian life, and increases this life in him. Years after, in the midst of his numerous occupations, he imagined he still heard these words: The just shall live by faith.

Luther's lectures thus prepared had little similarity with what had been heard till then. It was not an eloquent rhetorician or a pedantic schoolman that spoke; but a Christian who had felt the power of revealed truths,—who drew them forth from the Bible,—poured them out from the treasures of his heart,—and presented them all full of life to his astonished hearers. It was not the teaching of a man, but of God.

This entirely new method of expounding the truth made a great noise; the news of it spread far and wide, and attracted to the newly established university a crowd of youthful foreign students. Even many professors attended Luther's lectures, and among others Mellerstadt, frequently styled the light of the world, first rector of the university, who already at Leipsic, where he had been previously, had earnestly combated the ridiculous instructions of scholasticism, had denied that "the light created on the first day was Theology," and had maintained that the study of literature should be the foundation of that science. "This monk," said he, "will put all the doctors to shame; he will bring in a new doctrine, and reform the whole church;

for he builds upon the Word of Christ, and no one in the world can either resist or overthrow that Word, even should he attack it will all the arms of philosophy, of the sophists, Scotists, Albertists, Thomists, and with all the Tartaretus."

Staupitz, who was the instrument of God to develop all the gifts and treasures hidden in Luther, requested him to preach in the church of the Augustines. The young professor shrunk from this proposal. He desired to confine himself to his academical duties, he trembled at the thought of increasing them by those of the ministry. In vain did Staupitz say solicit him: "No! no!" replied he, "it is no slight thing to speak before men in the place of God." What affecting humility in this great reformer of the Church! Staupitz persisted; but the ingenious Luther, says one of his biographers, found fifteen arguments, pretexts, and evasions to defend himself against this invitation. At length, the chief of the Augustines persevering in his attack, Luther said: "Ah, doctor, by doing this you deprive me of life. I shall not be able to hold out three months."—"Well! so be it in God's name," replied the vicar-general, "for our Lord God has also need on high of devoted and skilful men." Luther was forced to yield.

In the middle of the square at Wittenberg stood an ancient wooden chapel, thirty feet long and twenty wide, whose walls propped up on all sides were falling into ruin. An old pulpit made of planks, and three feet high, received the preacher. It was in this wretched place that the preaching of the Reformation began. It was God's will that that which was to restore his glory should have the humblest beginnings. The foundations of the new Augustine Church had just been laid, and in the meanwhile this miserable place of worship was made use of. "This building," adds Myconius, one of Luther's contemporaries, who records these circumstances, "may well be compared to the stable in which Christ was born. It was in this wretched enclosure that God willed, so to speak, that his well-beloved Son should be born a second time. Among those thousands of cathedrals and parish churches with which the world is filled, there was not one at that time which God chose for the glorious preaching of eternal life."

Luther preaches: everything is striking in the new minister. His expressive countenance, his noble air, his clear and sonorous voice, captivate all his hearers. Before his time, the majority of preachers had sought rather what might amuse their congregation, than what would convert them. The great seriousness that pervaded all Luther's sermons, and the joy with which the knowledge of the Gospel had filled his heart, imparted to his eloquence an authority, a warmth, and an unction that his predecessors had not possessed. "Endowed with a ready and lively genius," says one of his opponents, "with a good memory, and employing his mother tongue with

wonderful facility, Luther was inferior to none of his contemporaries in eloquence. Speaking from the pulpit, as if he were agitated by some violent emotion, suiting the action to his words, he affected his hearers' minds in a surprising manner, and carried them like a torrent wherever he pleased. So much strength, grace, and eloquence are rarely found in these children of the North."—"He had," says Bossuet, "a lively and impetuous eloquence that charmed and led away the people."

Soon the little chapel could not hold the hearers who crowded to it. The council of Wittenberg then nominated Luther their chaplain, and invited him to preach in the city church. The impression he there produced was greater still. The energy of his genius, the eloquence of his style, and the excellency of the doctrines that he proclaimed, equally astonished his hearers. His reputation extended far and wide, and Frederick the Wise himself came once to Wittenberg to hear him.

This was the beginning of a new life for Luther. The slothfulness of the cloister had been succeeded by great activity. Freedom, labour, the earnest and constant action to which he could now devote himself at Wittenberg, succeeded in reestablishing harmony and peace within him. Now he was in his place, and the work of God was soon to display its majestic progress.

CHAPTER 6

Journey to Rome—Convent on the Po—Sickness at Bologna—Recollections of Rome—Julius II—Superstitious Devotion—Profanity of the Clergy—Conversations—Roman Scandals—Biblical Studies—Pilate's Staircase—Effects on Luther's Faith and on the Reformation—Gate of Paradise—Luther's Confession

Luther was teaching both in the academical hall and in the church, when he was interrupted in his labours. In 1510, or according to others in 1511 or 1512, he was sent to Rome. Seven convents of his order were at variance on certain points with the vicar-general. The acuteness of Luther's mind, his powerful language, and his talents for discussion, were the cause of his selection as agent for these seven monasteries before the pope. This divine dispensation was necessary for Luther. It was requisite that he should know Rome. Full of the prejudices and delusions of the cloister, he had always imagined it to be the abode of sanctity.

He set out and crossed the Alps. But he had scarcely descended into the plains of the rich and voluptuous Italy, before he found at every step subjects of astonishment and scandal. The poor German monk was entertained in a wealthy convent of the Benedictines on the banks of the Po, in Lombardy. The revenues of this monastery amounted to 36,000 ducats; 12,000 were devoted to the table, 12,000 were set apart for the buildings, and the remainder for the wants of the monks. The splendour of the apartments, the richness of their dress, and the delicacy of their food, confounded Luther. Marble, silk, luxury in all its forms—what a novel sight for the humble brother of the poor convent of Wittenberg! He was astonished and was silent; but when Friday came, what was his surprise at seeing the Benedictine table groaning under a load of meat. Upon this he resolved to speak. "The Church and the pope," said he, "forbid such things." The Benedictines were irritated at this reprimand of the unpolished German. But Luther having persisted, and perhaps threatened to make their irregularities known, some thought the simplest course would be to get rid of their importunate guest. The porter of the convent forewarned him of the danger he incurred by a longer stay.

He accordingly quitted this epicurean monastery, and reached Bologna, where he fell dangerously ill. Some have attributed this to the effects of poison; but it is more reasonable to suppose that the change of diet affected the frugal monk of Wittenberg, whose usual food was bread and herrings. This sickness was not to be unto death, but to the glory of God. He again relapsed into the sorrow and dejection so natural to him. To die thus, far from Germany, under this burning sky, and in a foreign land—what a sad fate. The distress of mind that he had felt at Erfurth

returned with fresh force. The sense of his sinfulness troubled him; the prospect of God's judgment filled him with dread. But at the very moment that these terrors had reached their highest pitch, the words of St. Paul, that had already struck him at Wittenberg, The just shall live by faith, recurred forcibly to his memory, and enlightened his soul like a ray from heaven. Thus restored and comforted, he soon regained his health, and resumed his journey towards Rome, expecting to find there a very different manner of life from that of the Lombard convents, and impatient of efface, by the sight of Roman holiness, the melancholy impressions left on his mind by his sojourn on the banks of the Po.

At length, after a toilsome journey under a burning Italian sun, at the beginning of summer, he drew near the seven-hilled city. His heart was moved within him: his eyes sought after the queen of the world and of the Church. As soon as he discovered the eternal city in the distance,—the city of St. Peter and St. Paul,—the metropolis of Catholicism,—he fell on his knees, exclaiming, "Holy Rome, I salute thee!"

Luther is in Rome: the Wittenberg professor stands in the midst of the eloquent ruins of consular and imperial Rome—of the Rome of so many martyrs and confessors of Jesus Christ. Here had lived that Plautus and that Virgil whose works he had carried with him into the cloister, and all those great men at whose history his heart had so often beat with emotion. He beholds their statues,—the ruins of the monuments that bear witness to their glory. But all that glory—all that power has fled; his feet trample on their dust. At each step he calls to mind the sad presentiments of Scipio shedding tears as he looked upon the ruins—the burning palaces and tottering walls of Carthage, and exclaimed, "Thus will it one day be with Rome!" "And in truth," said Luther, "the Rome of the Scipios and Caesars has become a corpse. There are such heaps of rubbish that the foundations of the houses are now where once stood the roofs. It is there," added he, as he threw a melancholy glance over these ruins, "it is there that once the riches and the treasures of the world were gathered together." All these fragments, against which his feet stumble at every step, proclaim to Luther within the very walls of Rome, that what is strongest in the eyes of man may be easily destroyed by the breath of the Lord.

But with these profane ashes are mingled other and holier ones: he recalls them to mind. The burial-place of the martyrs is not far from that of the generals of Rome and of her conquerors. Christian Rome with its sufferings has more power over the heart of the Saxon monk than pagan Rome with all its glory. Here that letter arrived in which Paul wrote, The just shall live by faith. He is not far from Appii Forum and the Three Taverns. Here is the house of Narcissus— there the palace of Caesar, where

the Lord delivered the Apostle from the jaws of the lion. Oh, how these recollections strengthen the heart of the monk of Wittenberg!

But Rome at this time presented a very different aspect. The warlike Julius II filled the papal chair, and not Leo X, as some distinguished German historians have said, doubtless through inattention. Luther has often related a trait in the character of this pope. When the news reached him that his army had been defeated by the French before Ravenna, he was repeating his daily prayers: he flung away the book, exclaiming with a terrible oath: "And thou too art become a Frenchman It is thus thou dost protect thy Church?" Then turning in the direction of the country to whose arms he thought to have recourse, he added: "Saint Switzer, pray for us!" Ignorance, levity, and dissolute manners, a profane spirit, a contempt for all that is sacred, a scandalous traffic in divine things—such was the spectacle afforded by this unhappy city. Yet the pious monk remained for sometime longer in his delusions.

Having arrived about the period of the feast of St. John, he heard the Romans repeating around him a proverb current among them: "Happy the mother whose son performs mass on St. John's eve!"— "Oh, how should I rejoice to render my mother happy!" said Luther to himself. Margaret's pious son endeavoured to repeat a mass on that day; but he could not, the throng was too great.

Fervent and meek, he visited all the churches and chapels; he believed in all the falsehoods that were told him; he devoutly performed all the holy practices that were required there, happy in being able to execute so many good works from which his fellow-countrymen were debarred. "Oh! how I regret," said the pious German to himself, "that my father and mother are still alive! What pleasure I should have in delivering them from the fire of purgatory by my masses, my prayers, and by so many other admirable works!" He had found the light; but the darkness was far from being entirely expelled from his understanding. His heart was converted; his mind was not yet enlightened: he had faith and love, but he wanted knowledge. It was no trifling matter to emerge from that thick night which had covered the earth for so many centuries.

Luther several times repeated mass at Rome. He officiated with all the unction and dignity that such an action appeared to him to require. But what affliction seized the heart of the Saxon monk at witnessing the sad and profane mechanism of the Roman priests, as they celebrated the sacrament of the altar! These on their part laughed at his simplicity. On day when he was officiating he found that the priests at an adjoining altar had already repeated seven masses before he had finished one. "Quick, quick!" cried one of them, "send our Lady back her Son;" making an impious

allusion to the transubstantiation of the bread into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. At another time Luther had only just reached the Gospel, when the priest at his side had already terminated the mass. "Passa, passa!" cried the latter to him, "make haste! have done with it at once."

His astonishment was still greater, when he found in the dignitaries of the papacy what he had already observed in the inferior clergy. He had hoped better things of them.

It was the fashion at the papal court to attack Christianity, and you could not pass for a well-bred man, unless you entertained some erroneous or heretical opinion on the doctrines of the Church. They had endeavoured to convince Erasmus, by means of certain extracts from Pliny, that there was no difference between the souls of men and of beasts; and some of the pope's youthful courtiers maintained that the orthodox faith was the result of the crafty devices of a few saints.

Luther's quality of envoy from the German Augustines procured him invitations to numerous meetings of distinguished ecclesiastics. One day, in particular, he was at table with several prelates, who displayed openly before him their buffoonery and impious conversation, and did not scruple to utter in his presence a thousand mockeries, thinking, no doubt, that he was of the same mind as themselves. Among other things, they related before the monk, laughing and priding themselves upon it, how, when they were repeating mass at the altar, instead of the sacramental words that were to transform the bread and wine into the flesh and blood of our Saviour, they pronounced over the elements this derisive expression: *Panis es, et panis manebis; vinum es, et vinum manebis*. Then, continued they, we elevate the host, and all the people bow down and worship it. Luther could hardly believe his ears. His disposition, although full of animation and even gaiety in the society of friends, was remarkably serious whenever sacred matters were concerned. The mockeries of Rome were a stumbling block to him. "I was," said he, "a thoughtful and pious young monk. Such language grieved me bitterly. If 'tis thus they speak at Rome, freely and publicly at the dinner table, thought I to myself, what would it be if their actions corresponded to their words, and if all—pope, cardinals, and courtiers—thus repeat the mass! And how they must have deceived me, who have heard them read devoutly so great a number!"

Luther often mixed with the monks and citizens of Rome. If some few extolled the pope and his party, the majority gave a free course to their complaints and to their sarcasms. What stories had they not to tell about the reigning pope, or Alexander VI, or about so many others! One day his Roman friends related how

Caesar Borgia, having fled from Rome, was taken in Spain. As they were going to try him, he called for arc, and asked for a confessor to visit him in his prison. A monk was sent to him, whom he slew, put on his hood, and escaped. "I heard that at Rome; and it is a positive fact," says Luther. Another day, passing down a wide street leading to St. Peter's, he halted in astonishment before a stone statue, representing a pope under the figure of a woman, holding a sceptre, clothed in the papal mantle, and carrying a child in her arms. It is a young woman of Mentz, he was told, whom the cardinals elected pope, and who was delivered of a child opposite this place. No pope, therefore, passes along that street. "I am surprised," says Luther, that the popes allow such a statue to remain."

Luther had thought to find the edifice of the Church encompassed with splendour and strength, but its doors were broken down, and the walls damaged by fire. He witnessed the desolation of the sanctuary, and drew back with horror. All his dreams had been of holiness,—he had discovered nought but profanation.

The disorders without the churches were not less shocking to him. "The police of Rome is very strict and severe," said he. "The judge or captain patrols the city every night on horseback with three hundred followers; he arrests everyone that is found in the streets: if they meet an armed man, he is hung, or thrown into the Tiber. And yet the city is filled with disorder and murder; whilst in those places where the Word of God is preached uprightly and in purity, peace and order prevail, without calling for the severity of the law."—"No one can imagine what sins and infamous actions are committed in Rome," said he at another time; "they must be seen and heard to be believed. Thus, they are in the habit of saying. If there is a hell, Rome is built over it: it is an abyss whence issues every kind of sin."

This spectacle made a deep impression even then upon Luther's mind; it was increased erelong. "The nearer we approach Rome, the greater number of bad Christians we meet with," said he, many years after. "There is a vulgar proverb, that he who goes to Rome the first time, looks out for a knave; the second time, he finds him; and the third, he brings him away with him. But people are now become so clever, that they make these three journeys in one." Machiavelli, one of the most profound geniuses of Italy, but also one of unenviable notoriety, who was living at Florence when Luther passed through that city on his way to Rome, has made the same remark: "The strongest symptom," said he, "of the approaching ruin of Christianity (by which he means Roman Catholicism) is, that the nearer people approach the capital of Christendom, the less Christian spirit is found in them. The scandalous examples and the crimes of the court of Rome are the cause why Italy has lost every principle of piety and all religious feeling. We Italians," continues this great historian, "are

indebted principally to the Church and the priests for having become impious and immoral." Luther, somewhat later, was sensible of the very great importance of this journey. "If they would give me one hundred thousand florins," said he, "I would not have missed seeing Rome!"

This visit was also very advantageous to him in regard to learning. Like Reuchlin, Luther took advantage of his residence in Italy to penetrate deeper into the meaning of the Holy Scriptures. He took lessons in Hebrew from a celebrated rabbi, named Elias Levita. It was at Rome that he partly acquired that knowledge of the Divine Word, under the attacks of which Rome was destined to fall.

But this journey was most important to Luther in another respect. Not only was the veil withdrawn, and the sardonic sneer, the mocking incredulity which lay concealed behind the Romish superstitions revealed to the future reformer, but the living faith that God had implanted in him was there powerfully strengthened.

We have seen how he at first gave himself up to all the vain observances which the Church enjoined for the expiation of sin. One day, among others, wishing to obtain an indulgence promised by the pope to all who should ascend on their knees what is called Pilate's Staircase, the poor Saxon monk was humbly creeping up those steps, which he was told had been miraculously transported from Jerusalem to Rome. But while he was performing this meritorious act, he thought he heard a voice of thunder crying from the bottom of his heart, as at Wittenberg and Bologna, The just shall live by faith. These words, that twice before had struck him like the voice of an angel from God, resounded unceasingly and powerfully within him. He rises in amazement from the steps up which he was dragging his body: he shudders at himself; he is ashamed of seeing to what a depth superstition had plunged him. He flies far from the scene of his folly.

This powerful text has a mysterious influence on the life of Luther. It was a creative sentence both for the reformer and for the Reformation. It was in these words God then said, Let there be light! and there was light.

It is frequently necessary for a truth to be presented many times to our minds in order that it may produce the due effect. Luther had profoundly studied the Epistle to the Romans, and yet the doctrine of justification by faith there taught had never appeared so clear to him. Now he comprehends that righteousness which alone can stand before God; now he receives for himself from the hand of Christ that obedience which God of his free gift imputes to the sinner, as soon as he raises his eyes with humility to the crucified Son of Man. This was the decisive epoch of Luther's inner

life. That faith which had saved him from the terrors of death, became the very soul of his theology, his stronghold in every danger; the principle which gave energy to his preaching and strength to his charity; the foundation of his peace, the encouragement to his labours, his comfort in the life and in the death.

But this great doctrine of a salvation proceeding from God and not from man, was not only the power of God to save Luther's soul; it became in a still greater degree the power of God to reform the Church:—an effectual weapon wielded by the apostles,—a weapon too long neglected, but taken at last, in all its primitive brightness, from the arsenal of the omnipotent God. At the very moment when Luther uprose from his knees on Pilate's Staircase, in agitation and amazement at those words which Paul had addressed fifteen centuries before to the inhabitants of that metropolis,—Truth, till then a melancholy captive, and fettered in the Church, uprose also to fall no more.

We should here listen to what Luther himself says on the matter. "Although I was a holy and blameless monk, my conscience was nevertheless full of trouble and anguish. I could not endure those words—the righteousness of God. I had no love for that holy and just God who punishes sinners. I was filled with secret anger against him: I hated him, because, not content with frightening by the law and the miseries of life us wretched sinners, already ruined by original sin, he still further increased our tortures by the Gospel But when, by the Spirit of God, I understood these words,—when I learnt how the justification of the sinner proceeds from the free mercy of our Lord through faith, then I felt born again like a new man; I entered through the open doors into the very paradise of God. Henceforward, also, I saw the beloved and Holy Scriptures with other eyes. I perused the Bible,—I brought together a great number of passages that taught me the nature of God's work. And as previously I had detested with all my heart these words,—The righteousness of God, I began from that hour to value them and to love them, as the sweetest and most consoling words in the Bible. In very truth, this language of St. Paul was to me the true gate of Paradise."

Thus when he was called on solemn occasions to confess this doctrine, Luther always recovered his enthusiasm and rough energy. "I see," observed he at an important moment, "that the devil is continually attacking this fundamental article by means of his doctors, and that in this respect he can never cease or take any repose. Well then, I, Doctor Martin Luther, unworthy herald of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, confess this article, that faith alone without works justifies before God; and I declare that it shall stand and remain for ever in despite of the emperor of the Tartars, the emperor of the Persians,—in spite of the pope and all the cardinals, with the bishops, priests, monks, and nuns,—in spite of kings, princes, and nobles,—and in

spite of all the world and of the devils themselves; and that if they endeavour to fight against this truth, they will draw the fires of hell upon their heads. This is the true and holy Gospel, and the declaration of me, Doctor Luther, according to the teaching of the Holy Ghost There is no one," continues he, "who has died for our sins, if not Jesus Christ the Son of God. I say it once again, should all the world and all the devils tear each other to pieces and burst with rage, that it is not the less true. And if it is He alone that taketh away our sins, it cannot be ourselves and our own works. But good works follow redemption, as the fruit grows on the tree. That is our doctrine—that is what is taught by the Holy Ghost and by all the communion of saints. We hold fast to it in the name of God. Amen!"

It was thus Luther found what had been overlooked, at least to a certain degree, by all doctors and reformers, even by the most illustrious of them. It was in Rome that God gave him this clear view of the fundamental doctrine of Christianity. He had gone to the city of the pontiffs for the solution of certain difficulties concerning a monastic order: he brought away from it in his heart the salvation of the Church.

CHAPTER 7

Luther Returns to Wittenberg—Made Doctor of Divinity—Carlstadt—Luther's Oath—Principle of the Reformation—Luther's Courage—Early Views of Reformation—The Schoolmen—Spalatin—Reuchlin's Quarrel with the Monks

Luther quitted Rome, and returned to Wittenberg: his heart was full of sorrow and indignation. Turning his eyes with disgust from the pontifical city, he directed them with hope to the Holy Scriptures—to that new life which the Word of God seemed then to promise to the world. This Word increased in his heart by all that the Church lost. He separated from the one to cling to the other. The whole of the Reformation was in that one movement. It set God in the place of the priest.

Staupitz and the elector did not lose sight of the monk whom they had called to the university of Wittenberg. It appears as if the vicar-general had a presentiment of the work that was to be done in the world, and that, finding it too difficult for himself, he wished to urge Luther towards it. There is nothing more remarkable,— nothing, perhaps, more mysterious than this person, who is seen everywhere urging forward Luther in the path where God calls him, and then going to end his days sadly in a cloister. The preaching of the young professor had made a deep impression on the prince; he had admired the strength of his understanding, the forcibleness of his eloquence, and the excellency of the matters that he expounded. The elector and his friend, desirous of advancing a man of such great promise, resolved that he should take the high degree of doctor of divinity. Staupitz repaired to the convent, and took Luther into the garden, where, alone with him under a tree that Luther in after-years delighted to point out to his disciples, the venerable father said to him: "My friend, you must now become Doctor of the Holy Scriptures."

Luther shrunk at the very thought: this eminent honour startled him. "Seek a more worthy person," replied he. "As for me, I cannot consent to it." The vicar-general persisted: "Our Lord God has much to do in the Church: he has need at this time of young and vigorous doctors." These words, adds Melancthon, were perhaps said playfully, yet the event corresponded with them; for generally many omens precede all great revolutions. It is not necessary to suppose that Melancthon here speaks of miraculous prophecies. The most incredulous age—that which preceded the present one—saw an exemplification of this remark. How many presages, without there being anything miraculous in them, announced the revolution in which it closed!

"But I am weak and sickly," replied Luther. "I have not long to live. Look out for some strong man."—"The Lord has work in heaven as well as on earth," replied the vicar-general: "dead or alive, He has need of you in his council."

"It is the Holy Ghost alone that can make a doctor of divinity," then urged the monk still more alarmed.—"Do what your convent requires," said Staupitz, "and what I, your vicar-general, command; for you have promised to obey us."—"But my poverty," resumed the brother: "I have no means of defraying the expenses incidental to such a promotion."—"Do not be uneasy about that," replied his friend: "the prince has done you the favour to take all the charges upon himself." Pressed on every side, Luther thought it his duty to give way.

It was about the end of the summer of 1512 that Luther set out for Leipsic to receive from the elector's treasurers the money necessary for his promotion. But according to court custom, the money did not arrive. The brother growing impatient wished to depart, but monastic obedience detained him. At length, on the 4th October, he received fifty florins from Pfeffinger and John Doltzig. In the receipt which he gave them, he employs no other title than that of monk. "I, Martin," wrote he, "brother of the order of Hermits." Luther hastened to return to Wittenberg.

Andrew Bodenstein of the city of Carlstadt was at that time dean of the theological faculty, and it is by the name of Carlstadt that this doctor is generally known. He was also called the A.B.C. Melancthon first gave him this designation on account of the three initials of his name. Bodenstein acquired in his native country the first elements of learning. He was of a serious and gloomy character, perhaps inclined to jealousy, and of a restless temper, but full of desire for knowledge, and of great capacity. He frequented several universities to augment his stores of learning, and studied theology at Rome. On his return from Italy, he settled at Wittenberg, and became doctor of divinity. "At this time," he said afterwards, "I had not yet read the Holy Scriptures." This remark gives us a very correct idea of what theology then was. Carlstadt, besides his functions of professor, was canon and archdeacon. Such was the man who in after-years was destined to create a schism in the Reformation. At this time he saw in Luther only an inferior; but the Augustine erelong became an object of jealousy to him. "I will not be less great than Luther," said he one day. Very far from anticipating at that period the great destinies of the young professor, Carlstadt conferred on his future rival the highest dignity of the university.

On the 18th October 1512, Luther was received licentiate in divinity, and took the following oath: "I swear to defend the evangelical truth with all my might." On the day following, Bodenstein solemnly conferred on him, in the presence of a

numerous assembly, the insignia of doctor of divinity. He was made a biblical doctor, and not a doctor of sentences; and was thus called to devote himself to the study of the Bible, and not to that of human traditions. He then pledged himself by an oath, as he himself related, to his well-beloved and Holy Scriptures. He promised to preach them faithfully, to teach them with purity, to study them all his life, and to defend them, both in disputation and in writing, against all false teachers, so far as God should give him ability.

This solemn oath was Luther's call to the Reformation. By imposing on his conscience the holy obligation of searching freely and boldly proclaiming the Christian truth, this oath raised the new doctor above the narrow limits to which his monastic vow would perhaps have confined him. Called by the university, by his sovereign, in the name of the imperial majesty and of the see of Rome itself, and bound before God by the most solemn oath, he became from that hour the most intrepid herald of the Word of Life. On that memorable day Luther was armed champion of the Bible.

We may accordingly look upon this oath, sworn to the Holy Scriptures, as one of the causes of the revival of the Church. The sole and infallible authority of the Word of God was the primary and fundamental principle of the Reformation. Every reform in detail that was afterwards carried out in the doctrine, morals, or government of the Church, and in its worship, was but a consequence of this first principle. In these days we can scarcely imagine the sensation produced by this elementary and simple but long-neglected truth. A few men of more enlarged views than the common, alone foresaw its immense consequences. Erelong the courageous voices of all the Reformers proclaimed this mighty principle, at the sound of which Rome shall crumble into dust: "The Christians receive no other doctrines than those founded on the express words of Jesus Christ, of the Apostles, and of the Prophets. No man, no assembly of doctors, has a right to prescribe new ones."

Luther's position was changed. The summons that he had received became to the reformer as one of those extraordinary calls which the Lord addressed to the prophets under the Old Covenant, and to the apostles under the New. The solemn engagement that he made produced so deep an impression upon his soul that the recollection of this oath was sufficient, in after-years, to console him in the midst of the greatest dangers and of the fiercest conflicts. And when he saw all Europe agitated and shaken by the Word that he had proclaimed; when the accusations of Rome, the reproaches of many pious men, the doubts and fears of his own too sensible heart, seemed likely to make him hesitate, fear, and fall into despair,—he called to mind the oath that he had taken, and remained steadfast, calm, and full of joy. "I have gone forward in the

Lord's name," said he in a critical moment, "and I have placed myself in his hands. His will be done! Who prayed him to make me a doctor?...If it was He who created me such, let him support me; or else if he repent of what he has done, let him deprive me of my office. This tribulation, therefore, alarms me not. I seek one thing only, which is to preserve the favour of God in all that he has called me to do with him." At another time he said: "He who undertakes anything without a Divine call, seeks his own glory. But I, Doctor Martin Luther, was forced to become a doctor. Popery desired to stop me in the performance of my duty: but you see what has happened to it, and worse still will befall it. They cannot defend themselves against me. I am determined, in God's name, to tread upon the lions, to trample dragons and serpents under foot. This will begin during my life, and will be accomplished after my death.

From the period of his oath, Luther no longer sought the truth for himself alone: he sought it also for the Church. Still full of the recollections of Rome, he saw confusedly before him a path in which he had promised to walk with all the energy of his soul. The spiritual life that had hitherto been manifested only within him, now extended itself without. This was the third epoch of his development. His entrance into the cloister had turned his thoughts towards God; the knowledge of the remission of sins and of the righteousness of faith had emancipated his soul; his doctor's oath gave him that baptism of fire by which he became a reformer of the Church.

His ideas were soon directed in a general manner towards the Reformation. In an address that he had written, as it would seem, to be delivered by the provost of Lietzkau at the Lateran council, he declared that the corruption of the world originated in the priests' teaching so many fables and traditions, instead of preaching the pure Word of God. The Word of Life, in his view, alone had the power of effecting the spiritual regeneration of man. Thus then already he made the salvation of the world depend upon the reestablishment of sound doctrine, and not upon a mere reformation of manners. Yet Luther was not entirely consistent with himself; he still entertained contradictory opinions: but a spirit of power beamed from all his writings; he courageously broke the bonds with which the systems of the schools had fettered the thoughts of men; he everywhere passed beyond the limits within which previous ages had so closely confined him, and opened up new paths. God was with him.

The first adversaries that he attacked were those famous schoolmen, whom he had himself so much studied, and who then reigned supreme in all the academies. He accused them of Pelagianism, and forcibly inveighing against Aristotle, the father of the schools, and against Thomas Aquinas, he undertook to hurl them both from the throne whence they governed, the one philosophy, and the other theology.

"Aristotle, Porphyry, the sententiary divines (the schoolmen)," he wrote to Lange, "are useless studies in our days. I desire nothing more earnestly than to unveil to the world that comedian who has deceived the Church by assuming a Greek mask, and to show his deformity to all." In every public discussion he was heard repeating: "The writings of the apostles and prophets are surer and more sublime than all the sophisms and all the divinity of the schools." Such language was new, but men gradually became used to it. About a year after he was able to write with exultation: "God is at work. Our theology and St. Augustine advance admirably and prevail in our university. Aristotle is declining: he is tottering towards his eternal ruin that is near at hand. The lectures on the Sentences produce nothing but weariness. No one can hope for hearers, unless he professes the Biblical theology." Happy the university of which such testimony can be given!

At the same time that Luther was attacking Aristotle, he took the side of Erasmus and Reuchlin against their enemies. He entered into communication with these great men and with other scholars, such as Pirckheimer, Mutianus, and Hutten, who belonged more or less to the same party. He also, about this period, formed another friendship that was of great importance through the whole course of his life.

There was at that time at the elector's court a person remarkable for his wisdom and his candour: this was George Spalatin. He was born at Spalatus or Spalt in the bishopric of Eichstadt, and had been originally curate of the village of Hohenkirch, near the Thuringian forests. He was afterwards chosen by Frederick the Wise to be his secretary, chaplain, and tutor to his nephew, John Frederick, who was one day to wear the electoral crown. Spalatin was a simple-hearted man in the midst of the court: he appeared timid in the presence of great events; circumspect and prudent, like his master, before the ardent Luther, with whom he corresponded daily. Like Staupitz, he was better suited for peaceful times. Such men are necessary: they are like those delicate substances in which jewels and crystal are wrapped to secure them from the injuries of transport. They seem useless; and yet without them all these precious objects would be broken and lost. Spalatin was not a man to effect great undertakings; but he faithfully and noiselessly performed the task imposed upon him.

He was at first one of the principal aids of his master in collecting those relics of saints, of which Frederick was so long a great admirer. But he, as well as the prince, turned by degrees towards the truth. The faith, which then reappeared in the Church, did not lay such violent hold upon him as upon Luther: it guided him by slower methods. He became Luther's friend at court; the minister through whom passed all matters between the Church and the State. The elector honoured Spalatin with great intimacy: they always travelled together in the same carriage. Nevertheless the

atmosphere of the court oppressed the good chaplain: he was affected by profound melancholy; he could have desired to quit all these honours, and become once more a simple pastor in the forests of Thuringia. But Luther consoled him, and exhorted him to remain firm at his post. Spalatin acquired general esteem: princes and learned men showed him the most sincere regard. Erasmus used to say, "I inscribe Spalatin's name not only among those of my principal friends, but still further among those of my most honoured protectors; and that, not upon paper, but on my heart."

Reuchlin's quarrel with the monks was then making a great noise in Germany. The most pious men were often undecided what part they should take; for the monks were eager to destroy the Hebrew books in which blasphemies against Christ were to be found. The elector commissioned his chaplain to consult the doctor of Wittenberg on this matter, as his reputation was already great. Here is Luther's answer: it is the first letter he addressed to the court-preacher:—

"What shall I say? These monks pretend to cast out Beelzebub, but it is not by the finger of God. I cease not from groaning and lamenting over it. We Christians are beginning to be wise outwardly, and mad inwardly. There are in every part of our Jerusalem blasphemies a hundred times worse than those of the Jews, and all there are filled with spiritual idols. It is our duty with holy zeal to carry out and destroy these internal enemies. But we neglect that which is most urgent; and the devil himself persuades us to abandon what belongs to us, at the same time that he prevents us from correcting what belongs to others."

CHAPTER 8

Faith—Popular Declamations—Academic Teaching—Luther's Purity of Life—German Theology or Mysticism—The Monk Spenlein—Justification by Faith—Luther on Erasmus—Faith and Works—Erasmus—Necessity of Works—Luther's Charity

Luther did not lose himself in this quarrel. A living faith in Christ filled his heart and his life. "Within my heart," said he, "reigns alone (and it ought thus to reign alone) faith in my Lord Jesus Christ, who is the beginning, middle, and end of all the thoughts that occupy my mind by day and night."

All his hearers listened with admiration as he spoke, whether from the professor's chair or from the pulpit, of that faith in Jesus Christ. His teaching diffused great light. Men were astonished that they had not earlier acknowledged truths that appeared so evident in his mouth. "The desire of self-justification," said he, "is the cause of all the distresses of the heart, But he who receives Jesus Christ as a Saviour, enjoys peace; and not only peace, but purity of heart. All sanctification of the heart is a fruit of faith. For faith is a divine work in us, which changes us and gives us a new birth, emanating from God himself. It kills the old Adam in us; and, by the Holy Ghost which is communicated to us, it gives us a new heart and makes us new men. It is not by empty speculations," he again exclaimed, "but by this practical method, that we can obtain a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ."

It was at this time that Luther preached those discourses on the Ten Commandments that have come down to us under the title of Popular Declamations. They contain errors no doubt; Luther became enlightened only by degrees. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." But what truth, simplicity, and eloquence are found in these discourses! How well can we understand the effect that the new preacher must have produced upon his audience and upon his age! We will quote but one passage taken from the beginning.

Luther ascends the pulpit of Wittenberg, and reads these words: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exod. 20:3). Then turning to the people who crowded the sanctuary, he says, "All the sons of Adam are idolaters, and have sinned against this first commandment."

Doubtless this strange assertion startled his hearers. He proceeds to justify it, and the speaker continues: "There are two kinds of idolatry—one external, the other internal.

"The external, in which man bows down to wood and stone, to beasts, and to the heavenly host.

"The internal, in which man, fearful of punishment or seeking his own pleasure, does not worship the creature, but loves him in his heart, and trusts in him "What kind of religion is this? You do not bend the knee before riches and honours, but you offer them your heart, the noblest portion of yourselves Alas! you worship God in body, but the creature in spirit.

"This idolatry prevails in every man until he is healed by the free gift of the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

"And how shall this cure be accomplished?

"Listen. Faith in Christ takes away from you all trust in your own wisdom, righteousness, and strength; it teaches you that if Christ had not died for you, and had not thus saved you, neither you nor any other creature would have been able to do it. Then you learn to despise all those things that are unavailing to you.

"Nothing now remains to you but Jesus Christ—Christ alone,— Christ allsufficient for your soul. Hoping for nothing from any creature, you have only Christ, from whom you hope for everything, and whom you love above everything.

"Now Christ is the one, sole, and true God. When you have him for your God, you have no other gods."

It is in this manner Luther shows how the soul is brought back to God, his sovereign good, by the Gospel, according to the words of Jesus Christ: I am the way; no man cometh unto the Father but by me. The man who speaks thus to his age aims at something more than the correction of a few abuses; he is earnest above all things to establish true religion. His work is not merely negative; it is primarily positive.

Luther afterwards turns his discourse against the superstitions which then filled Christendom;—the signs and mysterious characters, the observance of certain days and months, familiar spirits, phantoms, the influence of the stars, witchcraft, metamorphoses, incubi and succubi, the patronage of saints, &c. &c. &c.; one after another he attacks these idols, and with vigorous arm overthrows all these false gods.

But it was particularly in his lectureroom, before an enlightened and youthful audience, hungering for the truth, that he displays all the treasures of God's Word.

"He explained Scripture in such a manner," says his illustrious friend Melancthon, "that, in the judgment of all pious and well-informed men, it was as if a new morn had risen upon the doctrine after a long night of darkness. He showed the difference that existed between the Law and the Gospel. He refuted the then prevalent error of the churches and of the schools, that men by their works merit the remission of sins, and become righteous before God by an outward discipline. He thus led men's hearts back to the Son of God. Like John the Baptist, he pointed to the Lamb of God that has taken away the sins of the world; he explained how sin is freely pardoned on account of the Son of God, and that man receives this blessing through faith. He made no change in the ceremonies. On the contrary, the established discipline had not in his order a more faithful observer and defender. But he endeavoured more and more to make all understand these grand and essential doctrines of conversion, of the remission of sins, of faith, and of the true consolation that is to be found in the cross. Pious minds were struck and penetrated by the sweetness of this doctrine; the learned received it with joy. One might have said that Christ, the apostles, and the prophets were now issuing from the obscurity of some impure dungeon."

The firmness with which Luther relied on the Holy Scriptures imparted great authority to his teaching. But other circumstances added still more to his strength. In him every action of his life corresponded with his words. It was known that these discourses did not proceed merely from his lips: they had their source in his heart, and were practiced in all his works. And when, somewhat later, the Reformation burst forth, many influential men, who saw with regret these divisions in the Church, won over beforehand by the holiness of the reformer's life and by the beauty of his genius, not only did not oppose him, but, further still, embraced that doctrine to which he gave testimony by his works. The more men loved christian virtues, the more they inclined to the reformer. All honest divines were in his favour. This is what was said by those who knew him, and particularly by the wisest man of his age, Melancthon, and by Erasmus, the illustrious opponent of Luther. Envy and prejudice have dared to speak of his disorderly life. Wittenberg was changed by this preaching of faith, and that city became the focus of a light that was soon to illumine all Germany, and to shine on all the Church.

It was in 1516 that Luther published the work of an anonymous mystic theologian (probably Ebland, priest at Frankfort), entitled German Theology, in which the author shows how man may attain perfection by the three methods of purification, illumination, and communion. Luther never gave himself up to the mystic theology, but he received from it a salutary impression. It confirmed him in his disgust for the dry teaching of the schoolmen, in his contempt for the works and observances so much trumpeted by the Church, and in the conviction that he felt of

man's spiritual helplessness and of the necessity of grace, and in his attachment to the Bible. "I prefer," wrote he to Staupitz, "the mystics and the Bible to all the schoolmen;" thus placing the former teachers in the next rank to the sacred writers.

Perhaps, also, the German Theology aided him in forming a sounder idea on the sacraments, and above all on the mass; for the author maintains that the eucharist gives Christ to man, and does not offer up Christ to God. Luther accompanied this publication by a preface, in which he declared that, next to the Bible and St. Augustine, he had never met with a book in which he had learnt more of God, Christ, man, and of all things. Already many doctors began to speak ill of the Wittenberg professors, and accused them of innovation. "One would say," continues Luther, "that there had never lived men before us who taught as we teach. Yes, in truth, there have been many. But the anger of God, which our sins have deserved, has prevented us from seeing and hearing them. For a long time the universities have banished the Word of God into a corner.

Let them read this book, and then let them say whether our theology is new, for this is not a new book."

But if Luther derived from the mystic divinity whatever good it contained, he did not take the bad also. The great error of mysticism is to overlook the free gift of salvation. We are about to notice a remarkable example of the purity of his faith.

Luther had an affectionate and tender heart, and desired to see those whom he loved in possession of that light which had guided him into the paths of peace. He took advantage of every opportunity that occurred, as professor, preacher, or monk, as well as of his extensive correspondence, to communicate his treasure to others. One of his former brethren in the convent of Erfurth, the monk George Spenlein, was then residing in the convent of Memmingen, perhaps after having spent a short time at Wittenberg. Spenlein had commissioned the doctor to sell various articles that he had left with him—a tunic of Brussels cloth, a work by an Eisenach doctor, and a hood. Luther carefully discharged this commission. He received, says he in a letter to Spenlein, dated the 7th April 1516, one florin for the tunic, half a florin for the book, and a florin for the hood, and had remitted the amount to the father-vicar, to whom Spenlein owed three florins. But Luther quickly passes from this account of a monk's wardrobe to a more important subject.

"I should be very glad to know," wrote he to friar George, "what is the state of your soul. Is it not tired of its own righteousness? does it not breathe freely at last, and does it not confide in the righteousness of Christ? In our days, pride seduces

many, and especially those who labour with all their might to become righteous. Not understanding the righteousness of God that is given to us freely in Christ Jesus, they wish to stand before Him on their own merits. But that cannot be. When you were living with me, you were in that error, and so was I. I am yet struggling unceasingly against it, and I have not yet entirely triumphed over it.

"Oh, my dear brother, learn to know Christ, and him crucified. Learn to sing unto him a new song, to despair of yourself, and to say to him: Thou, Lord Jesus Christ, art my righteousness, and I am thy sin. Thou hast taken what was mine, and hast given me what was thine. What thou wast not, thou didst become, in order that I might become what I was not!—Beware, my dear George, of pretending to such purity as no longer to confess yourself a sinner: for Christ dwells only with sinners. He came down from heaven, where he was living among the righteous, in order to live also among sinners. Meditate carefully upon this love of Christ, and you will taste all its unspeakable consolation. If our labours and afflictions could give peace to the conscience, why should Christ have died? You will not find peace, save in him, by despairing of yourself and of your works, and in learning with what love he opens his arms to you, taking all your sins upon himself, and giving thee all his righteousness."

Thus the powerful doctrine that had already saved the world in the apostolic age, and which was destined to save it a second time in the days of the Reformation, was clearly and forcibly explained by Luther. Passing over the many ages of ignorance and superstition that had intervened, in this he gave his hand to Saint Paul.

Spenlein was not the only man whom he ought to instruct in this fundamental doctrine. The little truth that he found in this respect in the writings of Erasmus, made him uneasy. It was of great importance to enlighten a man whose authority was so great, and whose genius was so admirable. But how was he to do it? His courtfriend, the Elector's chaplain, was much respected by Erasmus: it is to him that Luther applies. "What displeases me in Erasmus, who is a man of such extensive learning, is, my dear Spalatin," wrote Luther, "that by the righteousness of works and of the law, of which the apostle speaks, he understands the fulfilling of the ceremonial law. The righteousness of the law consists not only in ceremonies, but in all the works of the Decalogue. Even if these works should be accomplished without faith in Christ, they may, it is true, produce a Fabricius a Regulus, and other men perfectly upright in the eyes of the world; but they then deserve as little to be styled righteousness, as the fruit of the medlar to be called a fig.

For we do not become righteous, as Aristotle maintains, by performing righteous works; but when we are become righteous, then we perform such works. The man

must first be changed, and afterwards the works. Abel was first accepted by God, and then his sacrifice." Luther continues: "Fulfil, I beseech you, the duty of a friend and of a Christian by communicating these matters to Erasmus." This letter is thus dated: "In haste, from the corner of our convent, 19th October 1516." It places in its true light the relation between Luther and Erasmus. Itshows the sincere interest he felt in what he thought would be really beneficial to this illustrious writer. Undoubtedly, the opposition shown by Erasmus to the truth compelled Luther somewhat later to combat him openly; but he did not do so until he had sought him to enlighten his antagonist.

At last then were heard explained ideas at once clear and deep on the nature of goodness. Then was declared the principle, that what constitutes the real goodness of an action is not its outward appearance, but the spirit in which it is performed. This was aiming a deadly blow at all those superstitious observances which for ages had oppressed the Church, and prevented christian virtues from growing up and flourishing within it.

"I am reading Erasmus," says Luther on another occasion, "but he daily loses his credit with me. I like to see him rebuke with so much firmness and learning the grovelling ignorance of the priests and monks; but I fear that he does not render great service to the doctrine of Jesus Christ. What is of man is dearer to him than what is of God. We are living in dangerous times. A man is not a good and judicious Christian because he understands Greek and Hebrew. Jerome who knew five languages, is inferior to Augustine who understood but one; although Erasmus thinks the contrary. I very carefully conceal my opinions concerning Erasmus, through fear of giving advantage to his adversaries. Perhaps the Lord will give him understanding in His time."

The helplessness of man—the omnipotence of God, were the two truths that Luther desired to re-establish. That is but a sad religion and a wretched philosophy by which man is directed to his own natural strength. Ages have tried in vain this so much boasted strength; and while man has, by his own natural powers, arrived at great excellence in all that concerns his earthly existence, he has never been able to scatter the darkness that conceals from his soul the knowledge of the true God, or to change a single inclination of his heart. The highest degree of wisdom attained by ambitious minds, or by souls thirsting with the desire of perfection, has been to despair of themselves. It is therefore a generous, a comforting, and supremely true doctrine which unveils our own impotency in order to proclaim a power from God by which we can do all things. That truly is a great reformation which vindicates on

earth the glory of heaven, and which pleads before man the rights of the Almighty God.

No one knew better than Luther the intimate and indissoluble bond that unites the gratuitous salvation of God with the free works of man. No one showed more plainly than he, that it is only by receiving all from Christ, that man can impart much to his brethren. He always represented these two actions—that of God and that of man—in the same picture. And thus it is, that after explaining to the friar Spenlein what is meant by saving righteousness, he adds, "If thou firmly believest those things, as is thy duty (for cursed is he who does not believe them), receive thy brethren who are still ignorant and in error, as Jesus Christ has received thee. Bear with them patiently. Make their sins thine own; and if thou hast any good thing, impart it to them. 'Receive ye one another,' says the apostle, 'as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.' (Romans 15:7.) It is a deplorable righteousness that cannot bear with others because it finds them wicked, and which thinks only of seeking the solitude of the desert, instead of doing them good by longsuffering, prayer, and example. If thou art the lily and the rose of Christ, know that thy dwelling-place is among thorns. Only take care lest by thy impatience, by thy rash judgments, and thy secret pride, thou dost to thyself become a thorn. Christ reigns in the midst of his enemies. If he had desired to live only among the good, and to die for those only who loved him, for whom, I pray, would he have died, and among whom would he have lived?"

It is affecting to see how Luther practiced these charitable precepts. An Augustine monk of Erfurth, George Leiffer, was exposed to many trials. Luther became informed of this, and within a week after writing the preceding letter to Spenlein, he came to him with words of comfort. "I learn that you are agitated by many tempests, and that your soul is tossed to and fro by the waves The cross of Christ is divided among all the world, and each man has his share.

You should not, therefore, reject that which has fallen to you. Re ceive it rather as a holy relic, not in the vessel of silver or of gold, but in what is far better—in a heart of gold,—in a heart full of meekness. If the wood of the cross has been so sanctified by the body and blood of Christ, that we consider it as the most venerable relic, how much more should the wrongs, persecutions, sufferings, and hatred of men, be holy relics unto us, since they have not only been touched by Christ's flesh, but have been embraced, kissed, and blessed by his infinite charity."

CHAPTER 9

Luther's first Theses—The Old Adam and Grace—Visitation of the Convents—Luther at Dresden and Erfurth—Tornator—Peace and the Cross—Results of Luther's Journey—His Labours—The Plague

Luther's teaching produced its natural fruits. Many of his disciples already felt themselves impelled to profess publicly the truths which their master's lessons had revealed to them. Among his hearers was a young scholar, Bernard of Feldkirchen, professor of Aristotle's physics in the university, and who five years later was the first of the evangelical ecclesiastics who entered into the bonds of matrimony.

It was Luther's wish that Feldkirchen should maintain, under his presidence, certain theses or propositions in which his principles were laid down. The doctrines professed by Luther thus gained additional publicity. The disputation took place in 1516.

This was Luther's first attack upon the dominion of the sophists and upon the papacy, as he himself characterises it. Weak as it was, it caused him some uneasiness. "I allow these propositions to be printed," said he many years after, when publishing them in his works, "principally that the greatness of my cause, and the success with which God has crowned it, may not make me vain. For they fully manifest my humiliation, that is to say, the infirmity and ignorance, the fear and trembling with which I began this conflict. I was alone: I had thrown myself imprudently into this business. Unable to retract, I conceded many important points to the pope, and I even adored him."

Some of the propositions were as follows:

"The old Adam is the vanity of vanities; he is the universal vanity; and he renders all other creatures vain, however good they may be.

"The old Adam is called the flesh, not only because he is led by the lusts of the flesh, but further, because should he be chaste, prudent, and righteous, he is not born again of God by the Holy Ghost.

"A man who has no part in the grace of God, cannot keep the commandments of God, or prepare himself, either wholly or in part, to receive grace; but he rests of necessity under the power of sin.

"The will of man without grace is not free, but is enslaved, and that too with its own consent.

"Jesus Christ, our strength and our righteousness, he who trieth the heart and reins, is the only discerner and judge of our merits.

"Since all is possible, by Christ, to the believer, it is superstitious to seek for other help, either in man's will or in the saints."

This disputation made a great noise, and it has been considered as the beginning of the Reformation.

The hour drew nigh in which the Reformation was to burst forth. God hastened to prepare the instrument that he had determined to employ. The elector, having built a new church at Wittenberg, to which he gave the name of All Saints, sent Staupitz into the Low Countries to collect relics for the ornament of the new edifice. The vicar-general commissioned Luther to replace him during his absence, and in particular to make a visitation of the forty monasteries of Misnia and Thuringia.

Luther repaired first to Grimma, and thence to Dresden. Everywhere he endeavoured to establish the truths that he had discovered, and to enlighten the members of his order.—"Do not bind yourselves to Aristotle or to any other teacher of a deceitful philosophy," said he to the monks, "but read the Word of God with diligence. Do not look for salvation in your own strength or in your good works, but in the merits of Christ and in God's grace."

An Augustine monk of Dresden had fled from his convent, and was at Mentz, where the prior of the Augustines had received him. Luther wrote to the latter, begging him to send back the stray sheep, and added these words so full of charity and truth: "I know that offences must needs come. It is no marvel that man falls; but it is so that he rises again and stands upright. Peter fell that he might know he was but a man. Even in our days the cedars of Lebanon are seen to fall. The very angels—a thing that exceeds all imagination!—have fallen in heaven, and Adam in paradise. Why then should we be surprised if a reed is shaken by the whirlwind, or if a smoking taper is extinguished?"

From Dresden Luther proceeded to Erfurth, and reappeared to discharge the functions of vicar-general in that very convent where, eleven years before, he had wound up the clock, opened the gates, and swept out the church. He nominated to the priorship of the convent his friend the bachelor John Lange, a learned and pious but

severe man: he exhorted him to affability and patience. "Put on," wrote he to him shortly after, "put on a spirit of meekness towards the prior of Nuremberg: this is but proper, seeing that he has assumed a spirit of bitterness and harshness. Bitterness is not expelled by bitterness, that is to say, the devil by the devil; but sweetness dispels bitterness, that is to say the finger of God casts out the evil spirit." We must, perhaps, regret that Luther did not on various occasions remember this excellent advice.

At Neustadt on the Orla there was nothing but disunion. Dissensions and quarrels reigned in the convent, and all the monks were at war with their prior. They assailed Luther with their complaints. The prior Michael Dressel, or Tornator, as Luther calls him, translating his name into Latin, on his side laid all his troubles before the doctor. "Peace, peace!" said he. "You seek peace," replied Luther; "but it is the peace of the world, and not the peace of Christ that you seek. Do you not know that our God has set his peace in the midst of war? He whom no one disturbs has not peace. But he who, troubled by all men and by the things of this life, bears all with tranquillity and joy—he possesses the true peace. Say rather with Christ: The cross, the cross! and there will be no cross. For the cross ceases to be a cross, as soon as we can say with love: O blessed cross, there is no wood like thine!" On his return to Wittenberg, Luther, desiring to put an end to these dissensions, permitted the monks to elect another prior.

Luther returned to Wittenberg after an absence of six weeks. He was afflicted at all that he had seen; but the journey gave him a better knowledge of the Church and of the world, increased his confidence in his intercourse with society, and afforded him many opportunities of founding schools, of pressing this fundamental truth that "Holy Scripture alone shows us the way to heaven," and of exhorting the brethren to live together in holiness, chastity, and peace. There is no doubt that much good seed was sown in the different Augustine convents during this journey of the reformer. The monastic orders, which had long been the support of Rome, did perhaps more for the Reformation than against it. This is true in particular of the Augustines. Almost all the pious men of liberal and elevated mind, who were living in the cloisters, turned towards the Gospel. A new and generous blood erelong circulated through these orders, which were, so to speak, the arteries of the German church. As yet nothing was known in the world of the new ideas of the Wittenberg Augustine, while they were already the chief topic of conversation in the chapters and monasteries. Many a cloister thus became a nursery of reformers. As soon as the great struggle took place, pious and able men issued from their obscurity, and abandoned the seclusion of a monastic life for the active career of ministers of God's Word. At the period of this

inspection of 1516 Luther awakened many drowsy souls by his words. Hence this year has been named "the morning star of the gospel-day."

Luther resumed his usual occupation. He was at this period overwhelmed with labour: it was not enough that he was professor, preacher, and confessor; he was burdened still further by many temporal occupations having reference to his order and his convent. "I have need almost continually," writes he, "of two secretaries; for I do nothing else all the day long but write letters. I am preacher to the convent, I read the prayers at table, I am pastor and parish minister, director of studies, the prior's vicar (that is to say, prior eleven times over!), inspector of the fishponds at Litzkau, counsel to the inns of Herzberg at Torgau, lecturer on Saint Paul, and commentator on the Psalms I have rarely time to repeat the daily prayers and to sing a hymn; without speaking of my struggles with flesh and blood, with the devil and the world. Learn from this what an idle man I am!"

About this time the plague broke out in Wittenberg. A great number of the students and teachers quitted the city. Luther remained. "I am not certain," wrote he to his friend at Erfurth, "if the plague will let me finish the Epistle to the Galatians. Its attacks are sudden and violent: it is making great ravages among the young in particular. You advise me to fly. Whither shall I fly? I hope that the world will not come to an end, if Brother Martin dies. If the pestilence spreads, I shall disperse the brothers in every direction; but as for me, my place is here; duty does not permit me to desert my post, until He who has called me shall summon me away. Not that I have no fear of death (for I am not Paul, I am only his commentator); but I hope that the Lord will deliver me from fear." Such was the resolution of the Wittenberg doctor. Shall he whom the pestilence could not force to retire a single step, shrink before Rome? Shall he yield through fear of the scaffold?

CHAPTER 10

The Relics—Relations of Luther with the Elector—Advice to the Chaplain—Duke George—His Character—Luther's Sermon before the Court—Dinner at Court—Evening with Emser

Luther displayed the same courage before the mighty of this world, that he had shown amidst the most formidable evils. The elector was much pleased with the vicar-general, who had made a rich harvest of relics in the Low Countries. Luther gives an account of them to Spalatin; and this affair of the relics, occurring at the moment when the Reformation is about to begin, is a singular circumstance. Most certainly, the reformers had little idea to what point they were tending. A bishopric appeared to the elector the only recompense worthy the services of the vicar-general. Luther, to whom Spalatin wrote on the subject, strongly disapproved of such an idea. "There are many things which please your prince," replied he, "and which, nevertheless, are displeasing to God. I do not deny that he is skilful in the matters of this world; but in what concerns God and the salvation of souls, I account him, as well as his councillor Pfeffinger, sevenfold blind. I do not say this behind their backs, like a slanderer; do not conceal it from them, for I am ready myself, and on all occasions, to tell it them both to their faces. Why would you," continues he, "surround this man (Staupitz) with all the whirlwinds and tempests of episcopal cares?"

The elector was not offended with Luther's frankness. "The prince," wrote Spalatin, "often speaks of you, and in honourable terms." Frederick sent the monk some very fine cloth for a gown. "It would be too fine," said Luther, "if it were not a prince's gift. I am not worthy that any man should think of me, much less a prince, and so great a prince as he. Those are my best friends who think the worst of me. Thank our prince for his kindness to me; but I cannot allow myself to be praised either by you or by any man; for all praise of man is vain, and only that which comes from God is true."

The excellent chaplain was unwilling to confine himself to his court functions. He wished to make himself useful to the people; but like many individuals in every age, he desired to do it without offence and without irritation, by conciliating the general favour. "Point out," wrote he to Luther, "some work that I may translate into our mother tongue; one that shall give general satisfaction, and at the same time be useful." Agreeable and useful!" replied Luther; "such a question is beyond my ability. The better things are, the less they please. What is more salutary than Jesus Christ? and yet he is to the majority a savour of death. You will tell me that you wish to be useful only to those who love what is good. In that case make them hear the voice of

Jesus Christ: you will be useful and agreeable, depend upon it, to a very small number only; for the sheep are rare in this region of wolves."

Luther, however, recommended to his friend the sermons of the Dominican Tauler. "I have never read," said he, "either in Latin or in our own language, a theology sounder, or more in conformity with the Gospel. Taste, then, and see how sweet the Lord is, but not till after you have first tasted and felt how bitter is everything that we are ourselves."

It was in the course of the year 1517 that Luther entered into communication with Duke George of Saxony. The house of Saxony had at that time two chiefs. Two princes, Ernest and Albert, carried off in their youth from the castle at Altenburg by Kunz of Kaufungen, had, by the treaty of Leipsic, become the founders of the two houses which still bear their names. The Elector Frederick, son of Ernest, was, at the period we are describing, the head of the Ernestine branch; and his cousin Duke George, of the Albertine. Dresden and Leipsic were both situated in the states of this duke, whose residence was in the former of these cities. His mother, Sidonia, was daughter of George Podiebrad, king of Bohemia. The long struggle that Bohemia had maintained with Rome, since the time of John Huss, had not been without influence on the prince of Saxony. He had often manifested a desire for a Reformation. "He has imbibed it with his mother's milk," said the priests; "he is by birth an enemy of the clergy."

He annoyed the bishops, abbots, canons, and monks in many ways; and his cousin, the Elector Frederick, was compelled more than once to interfere in their behalf. It seemed that Duke George would be one of the warmest partisans of a Reformation. The devout Frederick, on the other hand, who had in former years worn the spurs of Godfrey in the Holy Sepulchre, and girding himself with the long and heavy sword of the conqueror of Jerusalem, had made oath to fight for the Church, like that ancient and valiant knight, appeared destined to be the most ardent champion of Rome.

But in all that concerns the Gospel, the anticipations of human wisdom are frequently disappointed. The reverse of what we might have supposed took place. The duke would have been delighted to humiliate the Church and the clergy, to humble the bishops, whose princely retinue far surpassed his own; but it was another thing to receive into his heart the evangelical doctrine that would humble it, to acknowledge himself a guilty sinner, incapable of being saved, except by grace alone. He would willingly have reformed others, but he cared not to reform himself. He would perhaps have set his hand to the task of compelling the bishop of Mentz to be contented with

a single bishopric, and to keep no more than fourteen horses in his stables, as he said more than once; but when he saw another than himself step forward as a reformer,—when he beheld a simple monk undertake this work, and the Reformation gaining numerous partisans among the people, the haughty grandson of the Hussite king became the most violent adversary of the reform to which he had before shown himself favourable.

In the month of July 1517, Duke George requested Staupitz to send him an eloquent and learned preacher. Luther was recommended to him as a man of extensive learning and irreproachable conduct. The prince invited him to preach at Dresden in the castle-chapel, on the feast of St. James the Elder.

The day arrived. The duke and his court repaired to the chapel to hear the Wittenberg preacher. Luther joyfully seized this opportunity of testifying to the truth before such an assemblage. He selected his text from the gospel of the day: Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, &c. (Matthew 20:2023). He preached on the unreasonable desire and prayers of men; and then spoke emphatically on the assurance of salvation. He established it on this foundation, that those who receive the Word of God with faith are the true disciples of Jesus Christ, elected to eternal life. He next treated of gratuitous election, and showed that this doctrine, if presented in union with the work of Christ, has great power to dispel the terrors of conscience; so that men, instead of flying far from the righteous God, at the sight of their own unworthiness, are gently led to seek their refuge in Him. In conclusion, he related an allegory to three virgins, from which he deduced edifying instructions.

The word of truth made a deep impression on his hearers. Two of them in particular seemed to pay very great attention to the sermon of the Wittenberg monk. The first was a lady of respectable appearance, who was seated on the court benches, and on whose features a profound emotion might be traced. It was Madame de la Sale, first lady to the duchess. The other was a licentiate in canon law, Jerome Emser, councillor and secretary to the duke. Emser possessed great talents and extensive information. A courtier and skilful politician, he would have desired to be on good terms with the two contending parties—to pass at Rome for a defender of the papacy, and at the same time shine in Germany among the learned men of the age. But under this pliant mind was concealed a violent character. It was in the palace-chapel at Dresden that Luther and Emser first met; they were afterwards to break more than one lance together.

The dinner hour arrived for the inhabitants of the palace, and in a short time the ducal family and the persons attached to the court were assembled at table. The conversation naturally fell on the preacher of the morning. "How were you pleased with the sermon?" said the duke to the Madame de la Sale.—"If I could hear but one more like it," replied she, "I should die in peace."—"And I," replied George angrily, "would rather give a large sum not to have heard it; for such discourses are only calculated to make people sin with assurance."

The master having thus made known his opinion, the courtiers gave way uncontrolled to their dissatisfaction. Each one had his censure ready. Some maintained that in his allegory of the three virgins, Luther had in view three ladies of the court; on which there arose interminable babbling. They rallied the three ladies whom the monk of Wittenberg had thus, they said publicly pointed out. He is an ignorant fellow, said some; he is a proud monk, said others. Each one made his comment on the sermon, and put what he pleased into the preacher's mouth. The truth had fallen into the midst of a court that was little prepared to receive it. Everyone mangled it after his own fashion. But while the Word of God was thus an occasion of stumbling to many, it was for the first lady a stone of uprising. Falling sick a month after, she confidently embraced the grace of the Saviour, and died with joy.

As for the duke, it was not perhaps in vain that he heard this testimony to the truth. Whatever may have been his opposition to the Reformation during his life, we know that at his death he declared that he had no hope save in the merits of Jesus Christ.

It was natural that Emser should do the honours to Luther in his master's name. He invited him to supper. Luther refused; but Emser persisted, and prevailed on him to come. Luther thought he should only meet a few friends; but he soon perceived that a trap had been laid for him. A master of arts from Leipsic and several Dominicans were with the prince's secretary. The master of arts, having no mean opinion of himself, and full of hatred towards Luther, addressed him in a friendly and honied manner; but he soon got into a passion, and began to shout with all his might. The combat began. The dispute turned, says Luther, on the trumpery of Aristotle and St. Thomas. At last Luther defied the master of arts to define with all the learning of the Thomists what is the fulfilling of God's commandments. The embarrassed disputant put a good face on the matter. "Pay me my fee," said he holding out his hand, "da pastum." One would have said that he wished to give a regular lesson, taking his fellow-guests for his pupils. "At this foolish reply," adds the reformer, "we all burst into laughter, and then we parted."

During this conversation a Dominican was listening at the door. He longed to enter and spit on Luther's face: but he checked himself, and boasted of it afterwards. Emser, charmed at seeing his guests disputing, and appearing himself to preserve a due moderation, was earnest in excuses to Luther for the manner in which the evening had passed. The latter returned to Wittenberg.

CHAPTER 11

Return to Wittenberg—Theses—Free Will—Nature of Man—Rationalism—Proposal to the University of Erfurth—Eck—Urban Regius—Luther's Modesty—Effect of the Theses

Luther returned zealously to work. He was preparing six or seven young theologians who were shortly to undergo an examination for a license to teach. What rejoiced him most of all was, that their promotion would tend to the discredit of Aristotle. "I could desire to multiply the number of his enemies as soon as possible," said he. With this intent he published certain theses about that time which merit our attention.

Freewill was the great subject treated of. He had already touched upon it in the Feldkirchen theses; he now went deeper into the question. There had been from the very commencement of Christianity, a struggle more or less keen between the two doctrines of man's liberty and his enslavement. Some schoolmen had taught, like Pelagius and other doctors, that man possessed of himself the liberty or the power of loving God and or performing good works. Luther denied this liberty; not to deprive man of it, but in order that he might obtain it. The struggle in this great question is not therefore, as is generally said, between liberty and slavery: it is between a liberty proceeding from man, and one that comes from God. Those who style themselves the partisans of liberty say to man: "Thou hast the power of performing good works; thou hast no need of greater liberty." The others, who are called the partisans of servitude, say on the contrary: "True liberty is what thou needest, and God offers it thee in his Gospel." On the one side, they speak of liberty to perpetuate slavery; on the other, they speak of slavery to give liberty. Such was the contest in the times of St. Paul, of St. Augustine, and of Luther. Those who say, "Change nothing," are the champions of slavery: the others who say, "Let your fetters fall off," are the champions of liberty.

But we should deceive ourselves were we to sum up all the Reformation in that particular question. It is one of the numerous doctrines maintained by the Wittenberg doctor, and that is all. It would be indulging in a strange delusion to pretend that the Reformation was a fatalism,—an opposition to liberty. It was a noble emancipation of the human mind. Snapping the numerous bonds with which the hierarchy had bound men's minds,—restoring the ideas of liberty, of right, of free examination, it set free its own age, ourselves, and the remotest posterity. But let it not be said that the Reformation delivered man from every human despotism, but made him a slave by proclaiming the sovereignty of Grace. It desired, no doubt, to lead back the human will, to confound it with and render it entirely subject to the Divine will; but what

kind of philosophy is that which does not know that an entire conformity with the will of God is the sole, supreme, and perfect liberty; and that man will be really free, only when sovereign righteousness and eternal truth alone have dominion over him?

The following are some of the ninety-nine propositions that Luther put forth in the Church against the Pelagian rationalism of the scholastic theology:

"It is true that man, who has become a corrupt tree, can will or do naught but evil.

"It is false that the will, left to itself, can do good as well as evil; for it is not free, but in bondage.

"It is not in the power of man's will to choose or reject whatever is offered to it.

"Man cannot of his own nature will God to be God. He would prefer to be God himself, and that God were not God.

"The excellent, infallible, and sole preparation for grace, is the eternal election and predestination of God.

"It is false to say that if man does all that he can, he removes the obstacles to grace.

"In a word, nature possesses neither a pure reason nor a good will.

"On the side of man there is nothing that goes before grace, unless it be impotency and even rebellion.

"There is no moral virtue without pride or without sorrow, that is to say, without sin.

"From beginning to end, we are not masters of our actions, but their slaves.

"We do not become righteous by doing what is righteous; but having become righteous, we do what is righteous.

"He who says that a divine, who is not a logician, is a heretic and an empiric, maintains an empirical and heretical proposition.

"There is no form of reasoning (of syllogism) that holds with the things of God.

"If the form of the syllogism could be applied to Divine things, we should have knowledge and not belief of the article of the Holy Trinity.

"In a word, Aristotle is to divinity, as darkness to light."

"Man is a greater enemy to the grace of God than he is to the law itself.

"He who is without God's grace sins continually, even should he neither rob, murder, nor commit adultery.

"He sins, in that he does not fulfil the law spiritually.

"Not to kill, not to commit adultery, externally only and with regard to the actions, is the righteousness of hypocrites.

"The law of God and the will of man are two adversaries, that without the grace of God can never be reconciled.

"What the law commands, the will never wished, unless through fear or love it puts on the appearance of willing.

"The law is the taskmaster of the will, who is not overcome but by the Child that is born unto us. (Isaiah 9:6.)

"The law makes sin abound, for it exasperates and repels the will.

"But the grace of God makes righteousness abound through Jesus Christ, who causes us to love the law.

"Every work of the law appears good outwardly, but inwardly it is sin.

"The will, when it turns towards the law without the grace of God, does so in its own interest alone.

"Cursed are all those who perform the works of the law.

"Blessed are all those who perform the works of God's grace.

"The law which is good, and in which we have life, is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. (Romans 5:5.)

"Grace is not given in order that the work may be done more frequently and more easily, but because without grace there can be no work of love.

"To love God is to hate oneself and to know nothing out of God." Thus Luther ascribes to God all the good that man can do. There is no question of repairing, of patching up, if we may use the expression, man's will: an entirely new one must be given him. God only has been able to say this, because God alone can accomplish it. This is one of the greatest and most important truths that the human mind can conceive.

But while Luther proclaimed the powerlessness of man, he did not fall into the other extreme. He says in the eighth thesis: "It does not hence follow that the will is naturally depraved; that is to say, that its nature is that of evil itself, as the Manichees have taught." Originally man's nature was essentially good: it has turned away from the good, which is God, and inclined towards evil. Yet its holy and glorious origin still remains; and it is capable, by the power of God, of recovering this origin. It is the business of Christianity to restore it to him. It is true that the Gospel displays man in a state of humiliation and impotency, but between the two glories and two grandeurs: a past glory from which he has been precipitated, and a future glory to which he is called. There lies the truth: man is aware of it, and if he reflects ever so little, he easily discovers that all which is told him of his present purity, power, and glory is but a fiction with which to lull and sooth his pride.

Luther in his theses protested not only against the pretended goodness of man's will, but still more against the pretended light of his understanding in respect to Divine things. In truth, scholasticism had exalted his reason as well as his will. This theology, as some of its doctors have represented it, was at bottom nothing but a kind of rationalism. This is indicated by the propositions we have cited. One might fancy them directed against the rationalism of our days. In the theses that were the signal of the Reformation, Luther censured the Church and the popular superstitions which had added indulgences, purgatory, and so many other abuses to the Gospel. In those we have just quoted, he assailed the schools and rationalism, which had taken away from that very Gospel the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, of his revelation, and of his grace. The Reformation attacked rationalism before it turned against superstition. It proclaimed the rights of God, before it cut off the excrescences of man. It was positive before it became negative. This has not been sufficiently observed; an yet if

we do not notice it, we cannot justly appreciate that religious revolution and its true nature.

However this may be, the truths that Luther had just enunciated with so much energy were very novel. It would have been an easy matter to support these propositions at Wittenberg; for there his influence predominated. But it might have been said that he had chosen a field where he knew that no combatant would dare appear. By offering battle in another university, he would give them greater publicity; and it was by publicity that the Reformation was effected. He turned his eyes to Erfurth, whose theologians had shown themselves so irritated against him.

He therefore transmitted these propositions to John Lange, prior of Erfurth, and wrote to him: "My suspense as to your decision upon these paradoxes is great, extreme, too great perhaps, and full of anxiety. I strongly suspect that your theologians will consider as paradoxical, and even as kakodoxical, what is in my opinion very orthodox. Pray inform me, as soon as possible, of your sentiments upon them. Have the goodness to declare to the faculty of theology, and to all, that I am prepared to visit you, and to maintain these propositions publicly, either in the university or in the monastery." It does not appear that Luther's challenge was accepted. The monks of Erfurth were contented to let him know that these propositions had greatly displeased them.

But he desired to send them also into another quarter of Germany. For this purpose he turned his eyes on an individual who plays a great part in the history of the Reformation, and whom we must learn to know.

A distinguished professor, by name John Meyer, was then teaching at the university of Ingolstadt in Bavaria. He was born at Eck, a village in Swabia, and was commonly styled Doctor Eck. He was a friend of Luther, who esteemed his talents and his information. He was full of intelligence, had read much, and possessed an excellent memory. He united learning with eloquence. His gestures and his voice expressed the vivacity of his genius. Eck, as regards talent, was in the south of Germany what Luther was in the north. They were the two most remarkable theologians of that epoch, although having very different tendencies. Ingolstadt was almost the rival of Wittenberg. The reputation of these two doctors attracted from every quarter, to the universities where they taught, a crowd of students eager to listen to their teaching. Their personal qualities, not less than their learning, endeared them to their disciples. The character of Dr. Eck had been attacked; but one trait of his life will show that, at this period at least, his heart was not closed against generous impulses.

Among the students whom his reputation had attracted to Ingolstadt, was a young man named Urban Regius, born on the shores of an Alpine lake. He had studied first at the university of Friburg in Brisgau. On his arrival at Ingolstadt, Urban followed the philosophical courses, and gained the professor's favour. Compelled to provide for his own wants, he was obliged to undertake the charge of some young noblemen. He had not only to watch over their conduct and their studies, but even to provide with his own money the books and clothing that they stood in need of. These youths dressed with elegance, and were fond of good living. Regius, in his embarrassed condition, entreated the parents to withdraw their sons.—"Take courage," was their reply. His debts increased; his creditors became pressing: he knew not what to do.

The emperor was at that time collecting an army against the Turks. Recruiting parties arrived at Ingolstadt, and in his despair Urban enlisted. Dressed in his military uniform, he appeared in the ranks at their final review previous to leaving the town. At that moment Dr. Eck came into the square with several of his colleagues. To his great surprise he recognised his pupil among the recruits. "Urban Regius!" said he, fixing on him a piercing glance. "Here!" replied the young soldier. "Pray, what is the cause of this change?" The young man told his story. "I will take the matter upon myself," replied Eck, who then took away his halberd, and bought him off. The parents, threatened by the doctor with their prince's displeasure, sent the money necessary to pay their children's expenses. Urban Regius was saved, and became somewhat later one of the bulwarks of the Reformation.

It was through Dr. Eck that Luther thought of making his propositions on Pelagianism and scholastic rationalism known in the south of the empire. He did not, however, send them direct to the Ingolstadt professor, but forwarded them to a common friend, the excellent Christopher Scheurl, secretary to the city of Nuremberg, begging him to transmit them to Eck at Ingolstadt, which was not far from Nuremberg. "I forward you," said he, "my propositions, which are altogether paradoxical, and even kakistodoxical, as it would appear to many. Communicate them to our dear Eck, that most learned and ingenious man, in order that I may see and hear what he thinks of them." It was thus Luther spoke at that time of Dr. Eck: such was the friendship that united them. It was not Luther that broke if off.

But it was not on this field that the battle was to be fought. These propositions turned on doctrines of perhaps greater importance than those which two months later set the Church in flames; and yet, in despite of Luther's challenges, they passed unnoticed. At most, they were read within the walls of the schools, and created no

sensation beyond them. It was because they were only university propositions, or theological doctrines; while the theses which followed had reference to an evil that had grown up among the people, and which was then breaking bounds on every side throughout Germany. So long as Luther was content to revive forgotten doctrines, men were silent; but when he pointed out abuses that injured all the world, everybody listened.

And yet in neither case did Luther propose more than to excite one of those theological discussions so frequent in the universities. This was the circle to which his thoughts were restricted. He had no idea of becoming a reformer. He was humble, and his humility bordered on distrust and anxiety. "Considering my ignorance," said he, "I deserve only to be hidden in some corner, without being known to anyone under the sun." But a mighty hand drew him from this corner in which he would have desired to remain unknown to the world. A circumstance, independent of Luther's will, threw him into the field of battle, and the war began. It is this providential circumstance which the course of events now calls upon us to relate.

Book 3—The Indulgences and the Theses 1517—May 1518

CHAPTER 1

Procession—Tetzel—Tetzel's Sermon—Confession—Four Graces—Sale—Public Penance—Letter of Indulgence—Exceptions—Amusements and Dissipation

A great agitation prevailed at that time among the German people. The Church had opened a vast market upon earth. From the crowds of purchasers, and the shouts and jokes of the sellers, it might have been called a fair, but a fair conducted by monks. The merchandise that they were extolling, and which they offered at a reduced price, was, said they, the salvation of souls!

These dealers traversed the country in a handsome carriage, accompanied by three horsemen, living in great state, and spending freely. One might have thought it some archbishop on a progress through his diocese, with his retinue and officers, and not a common chapman or a begging monk. When the procession approached a town, a deputy waited on the magistrate, and said, "The Grace of God and of the Holy Father is at your gates." Instantly everything was in motion in the place. The clergy, the priests and nuns, the council, the schoolmasters and their pupils, the trades with their banners, men and women, young and old, went out to meet these merchants, bearing lighted tapers in their hands, and advancing to the sound of music and of all the bells, "so that they could not have received God himself with greater honour," says an historian.

The salutations being exchanged, the procession moved towards the church. The pontiff's bull of grace was carried in front on a velvet cushion, or on cloth of gold. The chief of the indulgence merchants came next, holding a large red wooden cross in his hand. All the procession thus moved along amidst singing, prayers, and the smoke of incense. The sound of the organ, and loud music welcomed the merchant monk and his attendants into the temple. The cross that he had carried was placed in front of the altar: on it were suspended the arms of the pope, and so long as it remained there, the clergy of the place, the penitentiaries, and the under-commissaries with white wands, came daily after vespers, or before the salutation, to render it homage. This great affair excited a lively sensation in the quiet cities of Germany.

One person in particular attracted the attention of the spectators at these sales. It was he who carried the red cross, and who played the chief part. He was robed in the Dominican dress, and moved with an air of arrogance. His voice was sonorous,

and seemed in its full strength, although he had already attained his sixty-third year. This man, the son of a Leipsic goldsmith name Diez, was known as John Diezel, or Tetzel. He had studied in his native city, had taken the degree of bachelor in 1487, and two years after had entered the Dominican order. Numerous honours had been heaped upon his head. Bachelor of divinity, prior of the Dominicans, apostolic commissary, inquisitor (haereticae pravitatis inquisitor), he had from the year 1502 uninterruptedly filled the office of dealer in indulgences. The skill that he had acquired as subordinate had soon procured him the nomination as chief commissary.

He received eighty florins a month; all his expenses were paid; a carriage and three horses were at his disposal; but his subsidiary profits, as may be easily imagined, far exceeded his stipend. In 1507 he gained at Friburg two thousand florins in two days. If he had the office of a mountebank, he possessed the manners also. Convicted at Inspruck of adultery and infamous conduct, his vices had nearly caused his death. The Emperor Maximilian had ordered him to be put into a sack and thrown into the river. The Elector Frederick of Saxony interfered and obtained his pardon. But the lesson that he had received had not taught him modesty. He led two of his children about with him. Miltitz, the pope's legate, mentions this fact in one of his letters. It would have been difficult to find in all the convents of Germany a man better qualified than Tetzel for the business with which he was charged. To the theology of a monk, to the zeal and spirit of an inquisitor, he united the greatest effrontery; and the circumstance that most especially facilitated his task, was his skill in inventing those extravagant stories by which the people's minds are captivated. To him all means were good that filled his chest. Raising his voice and displaying the eloquence of a mountebank, he offered his indulgences to all comers, and knew better than any tradesman how to extol his wares.

When the cross had been erected, and the arms of the pope suspended from it, Tetzel went into the pulpit, and with a tone of assurance began to extol the value of indulgences, in the presence of a crowd whom the ceremony had attracted to the holy place. The people listened and stared as they heard of the admirable virtues that he announced. A Jesuit historian, speaking of the Dominican monks whom Tetzel had taken with him, says: "Some of these preachers failed not, as usual, to go beyond the matter they were treating of, and so far to exaggerate the worth of indulgences, that they gave the people cause to believe that they were assured of their salvation, and of the deliverance of souls from purgatory, so soon as they had given their money." If such were the disciples, we may easily imagine what the master must have been. Let us listen to one of the harangues he delivered after the elevation of the cross.

"Indulgences (said he) are the most precious and the most noble of God's gifts.

"This cross (pointing to the red cross) has as much efficacy as the very cross of Jesus Christ.

"Come and I will give you letters, all properly sealed, by which even the sins that you intend to commit may be pardoned.

"I would not change my privileges for those of St. Peter in heaven; for I have saved more souls by my indulgences than the apostle by his sermons.

"There is no sin so great, that an indulgence cannot remit; and even if anyone (which is doubtless impossible) had offered violence to the blessed Virgin Mary, mother of God, let him pay—only let him pay well, and all will be forgiven him.

"Reflect then, that for every mortal sin you must, after confession and contrition, do penance for seven years, either in this life or in purgatory: now, how many mortal sins are there not committed in a day, how many in a week, how many in a month, how many in a year, how many in a whole life!..... Alas! these sins are almost

infinite, and they entail an infinite penalty in the fires of purgatory. And now, by means of these letters of indulgence, you can once in your life, in every case except four, which are reserved for the apostolic see, and afterwards in the article of death, obtain a plenary remission of all your penalties and all your sins!"

Tetzel even entered into financial calculations. "Do you not know," said he, "that if anyone desires to visit Rome, or any country where travellers incur danger, he sends his money to the bank, and for every hundred florins that he wishes to have, he gives five or six or ten more, that by means of the letters of this bank he may be safely repaid his money at Rome or elsewhere And you, for a quarter of a florin, will not receive these letters of indulgence, by means of which you may introduce into paradise, not a vile metal, but a divine and immortal soul, without its running any risk."

Tetzel then passed to another subject.

"But more than this," said he: "indulgences avail not only for the living, but for the dead.

"For that, repentance is not even necessary.

"Priest! noble! merchant! wife! youth! maiden! do you not hear your parents and your other friends who are dead, and who cry from the abyss: We are suffering horrible torments! a trifling alms would deliver us; you can give it, and you will not!"

All shuddered at these words uttered by the thundering voice of the impostor monk.

"At the very instant," continued Tetzel, "that the money rattles at the bottom of the chest, the soul escapes from purgatory, and flies liberated to heaven.

"O stupid and brutish people, who do not understand the grace so richly offered! Now heaven is everywhere opened! Do you refuse to enter now? When, then will you enter? Now you can ransom so many souls!... Stiff-necked and thoughtless man! with twelve groats you can deliver your father from purgatory, and you are ungrateful enough not to save him! I shall be justified in the day of judgment; but you,—you will be punished so much the more severely for having neglected so great salvation.—I declare to you, though you should have but a single coat, you ought to strip it off and sell it, in order to obtain this grace The Lord our God no longer reigns. He has resigned all power to the pope."

Then seeking to make use of other arms besides, he added: "Do you know why our most Holy Lord distributes so rich a grace? It is to restore the ruined Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, so that it may not have its equal in the world. This Church contains the bodies of the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and those of a multitude of martyrs. These saintly bodies, through the present state of the building, are now, alas! beaten upon, inundated, polluted, dishonoured, reduced to rottenness, by the rain and the hail Alas! shall these sacred ashes remain longer in the mire and in degradation?"

This description failed not to produce an impression on many, who burned with a desire to come to the aid of poor Leo X, who had not the means of sheltering the bodies of St. Peter and St. Paul from the weather.

The orator next turned against the cavillers and traitors who opposed his work: "I declare them excommunicated!" exclaimed he.

Then addressing the docile souls, and making an impious application of scripture, he exclaimed: "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them!"

And in conclusion, pointing to the strong box in which the money was received, he generally finished his pathetic discourse by three appeals to his auditory: "Bring—bring—bring!"—"He used to shout these words with such a horrible bellowing," wrote Luther, "that one would have said it was a mad bull rushing on the people and goring them with his horns." When his speech was ended, he left the pulpit, ran towards the moneybox, and in sight of all the people flung into it a piece of money, taking care that it should rattle loudly.

Such were the discourses that Germany listened to with astonishment in the days when God was preparing Luther.

The speech being concluded, the indulgence was considered as "having established its throne in the place with due solemnity." Confessionals decorated with the pope's arms were ranged about: the under-commissaries and the confessors whom they selected were considered the representatives of the apostolic penitentiaries of Rome at the time of a great jubilee; and on each of their confessionals were posted in large characters, their names, surnames, and titles.

Then thronged the crowd around the confessors. Each came with a piece of money in his hand. Men, women, and children, the poor, and even those who lived on alms—all found money. The penitentiaries, after having explained anew to each individual privately the greatness of the indulgence, addressed this question to the penitents: "How much money can you conscientiously spare to obtain so complete a remission?" The demand, said the Instructions of the Archbishop of Mentz to the Commissaries, should be made at this moment, in order that the penitents might be better disposed to contribute.

Four precious graces were promised to those who should aid in building the basilic of St. Peter. "The first grace that we announce to you," said the commissaries, in accordance with the letter of their instructions, "is the full pardon of every sin." Next followed three other graces: first, the right of choosing a confessor, who, whenever the hour of death appeared at hand, should give absolution from all sin, and even from the greatest crimes reserved for the apostolic see: secondly, a participation in all the blessings, works, and merits of the Catholic Church, prayers, fasts, alms, and pilgrimages; thirdly, redemption of the souls that are in purgatory.

To obtain the first of these graces, it was requisite to have contrition of heart and confession of mouth, or at least an intention of confessing. But as for the three others, they might be obtained without contrition, without confession, simply by paying. Christopher Columbus, extolling the value of gold, had said ere this with great

seriousness: "Whoever possesses it can introduce souls into paradise." Such was the doctrine taught by the Archbishop of Mentz and by the papal commissaries.

"As for those," said they, "who wish to deliver souls from purgatory and procure the pardon of all their offences, let them put money into the chest; contrition of heart or confession of mouth is not necessary. Let them only hasten to bring their money; for thus will they perform a work most useful to the souls of the dead, and to the building of the Church of St. Peter." Greater blessings could not be offered at a lower rate.

The confession over, and that was soon done, the faithful hastened to the vendor. One alone was charged with the sale. His stall was near the cross. He cast inquiring looks on those who approached him. He examined their manner, their gait, their dress, and he required a sum proportionate to the appearance of the individual who presented himself. Kings, queens, princes, archbishops, bishops, were, according to the scale, to pay twenty-five ducats for an ordinary indulgence. Abbots, counts, and barons, ten. The other nobles, the rectors, and all those who possessed an income of five hundred florins, paid six. Those who had two hundred florins a year paid one; and others, only a half. Moreover, of this tariff could not be carried out to the letter, full powers were given the apostolical commissionary; and all was to be arranged according to the data of "sound reason," and the generosity of the donor. For particular sins, Tetzel had a particular tax. For polygamy it was six ducats; for sacrilege and perjury, nine ducats; for murder, eight ducats; for witchcraft, two ducats. Samson, who exercised the same trade in Switzerland as Tetzel in Germany, had a somewhat different scale. For infanticide he required four livres tournois; and for parricide or fratricide, one ducat.

The apostolical commissaries sometimes met with difficulties in their trade. It frequently happened, both in towns and villages, that the men were opposed to this traffic, and forbade their wives to give anything to these merchants. What could their pious spouses do? "Have you not your dowry, or other property, at your own disposal?" asked the vendors. "In that case you can dispose of it for so holy a work, against the will of your husbands."

The hand that had given the indulgence could not receive the money; this was forbidden under the severest penalties: there were good reasons to fear lest that hand should prove unfaithful. The penitent was himself to drop the price of his pardon into the chest. They showed an angry countenance against all who daringly kept their purses closed.

If among the crowd of those who thronged the confessionals there should be found a man whose crime had been public, though it was one that the civil laws could not reach, he was to begin by doing public penance. They first led him into a chapel or the vestry; there they stripped off his garments, took off his shoes, and left him nothing but his shirt. They crossed his arms over his bosom: placed a taper in one hand, and a rod in the other. The penitent then walked at the head of a procession to the red cross. Here he remained kneeling until the chants and the offertory were over. After this the commissary struck up the psalm, Miserere Mei! The confessors immediately drew near the penitent, and conducted him through the station towards the commissary, who, taking the rod and striking him thrice gently on the back, said to him: "God have pity on thee, and pardon thy sin!" He then began to sing the Kyrie Eleison: the penitent was led to the front of the cross, where the confessor gave him the apostolical absolution, and declared him reinstated in the communion of the faithful. Sad mummery, concluded by the words of Holy Scripture, that, in such a moment, were mere profanity!

We give one of these letters of absolution. It is worth while learning the contents of these diplomas which led to the Reformation of the Church.

"May our Lord Jesus Christ have pity on thee, N.N., and absolve thee by the merits of his most holy passion! And I, in virtue of the apostolical power that has been confided to me, absolve thee from all ecclesiastical censures, judgments, and penalties, which thou mayst have incurred; moreover, from all excesses, sins, and crimes that thou mayst have committed, however great and enormous they may be, and from whatsoever cause, were they even reserved for our most holy father the pope and for the apostolic see. I blot out all the stains of inability and all marks of infamy that thou mayst have drawn upon thyself on this occasion. I remit the penalties that thou shouldst have endured in purgatory. I restore thee anew to participation in the sacraments of the Church. I incorporate thee afresh in the communion of saints, and re-establish thee in the purity and innocence which thou hadst at thy baptism. So that in the hour of death, the gate by which sinners enter the place of torments and punishment shall be closed against thee, and, on the contrary, the gate leading to the paradise of joy shall be open. And if thou shouldst not die for long years, this grace will remain unalterable until thy last hour shall arrive.

"In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen. "Friar John Tetzel, commissary, has signed this with his own hand."

With what skill are presumptuous and lying words here foisted in between holy and christian expressions!

All the believers were required to confess in the place where the red cross was set up. None were excepted but the sick and aged, and pregnant women. If, however, there chanced to be in the neighbourhood some noble in his castle, some great personage in his palace, there was also an exemption for him, as he would not like to be mixed up with this crowd, and his money was well worth the pains of fetching from his mansion.

Was there any convent whose chiefs, opposed to Tetzel's commerce, forbade their monks to visit the places where the Indulgence had set up its throne, they found means of remedying the evil by sending them confessors, who were empowered to absolve them contrary to the rules of their order and the will of their superiors. There was no vein in the gold mine that they did not find the means of working.

Then came what was the end and aim of the whole business: the reckoning of the money. For greater security, the chest had three keys: one was in Tetzel's keeping; the second in that of a treasurer delegated by the house of Fugger of Augsburg, to whom this vast enterprise has been consigned; the third was confided to the civil authority. When the time was come, the moneyboxes were opened before a public notary, and the contents were duly counted and registered. Must not Christ arise and drive out these profane money changers from the sanctuary?

When the mission was over, the dealers relaxed from their toils. The instructions of the commissary general forbade them, it is true, to frequent taverns and places of bad repute; but they cared little for this prohibition. Sin could have but few terrors for those who made so easy a traffic in it. "The collectors led a disorderly life," says a Romanist historian; "they squandered in taverns, gambling houses, and places of ill-fame, all that the people had saved from their necessities." It has even been asserted, that when they were in the taverns they would often stake the salvation of souls on a throw of the dice.

CHAPTER 2

The Franciscan Confessor—The Soul in the Burial-ground—The Shoemaker of Hagenau—The Students—Myconius—Conversation with Tetzel—Trick of a Nobleman—Remarks of the Wise and of the People—A Miner of Schneeberg

But now let us turn to the scenes which this sale of the pardon of sins at that time gave rise to in Germany. There are characteristics which, of themselves alone, depict the times. We prefer using the language of the men whose history we are narrating.

At Magdeburg, Tetzel refused to absolve a rich lady, unless (as he declared to her) she would pay one hundred florins in advance. She requested the advice of her usual confessor, who was a Franciscan: "God grants the remission of sins gratuitously," replied the monk, "he does not sell it." He begged her, however, not to communicate to Tetzel the counsel she had received from him. But this merchant having notwithstanding heard a report of this opinion so contrary to his interests, exclaimed: "Such a counsellor deserves to be banished or to be burnt."

Tetzel rarely found men enlightened enough, and still more rarely men who were bold enough, to resist him. In general he easily managed the superstitious crowd. He had set up the red cross of the indulgences at Zwickau, and the worthy parishioners had hastened to drop into his strongbox the money that would deliver them. He was about to leave with a well-stored purse, when, on the eve of his departure, the chaplains and their acolytes asked him for a farewell supper. The request was just. But how contrive it? the money was already counted and sealed up. On the morrow he caused the great bell to be tolled. The crowd rushed into the church; each one imagined something extraordinary had happened, seeing that the business was over. "I had resolved," said he, "to depart this morning; but last night I was awakened by groans. I listened attentively.....they came from the cemetery Alas! it was some poor soul calling upon me and earnestly entreating me to deliver it from the torments by which it is consumed! I shall stay, therefore, one day longer, in order to move the compassion of all christian hearts in favour of this unhappy soul. I myself will be the first to give, and he that does not follow my example will merit condemnation." What heart would not have replied to this appeal? Who knows, besides, what soul it is thus crying from the cemetery? The offerings were abundant, and Tetzel entertained the chaplains and their acolytes with a joyous repast, the expense of which was defrayed by the offerings given in behalf of the soul of Zwickau.

The indulgence merchants had visited Hagenau in 1517. The wife of a shoemaker, taking advantage of the authorisation given in the commissary general's instructions, had procured a letter of indulgence, contrary to her husband's will, and had paid a gold florin. She died shortly after. As the husband had not caused a mass to be said for the repose of her soul, the priest charged him with contempt of religion, and the magistrate of Hagenau summoned him to appear in court. The shoemaker put his wife's indulgence in his pocket, and went to answer the accusation.—"Is your wife dead?" asked the magistrate.—"Yes," replied he.—"What have you done for her?"—"I have buried her body, and commended her soul to God."—"But have you had a mass said for the repose of her soul?"— "I have not: it was of no use; she entered heaven at the moment of her death."—"How do you know that?"—"Here is the proof." As he said these words, he drew the indulgence from his pocket, and the magistrate, in presence of the priest, read in so many words, that, at the moment of her death, the woman who had received it would not go into purgatory, but would at once enter into heaven. "If the reverend gentleman maintains that a mass is still necessary," added the widower, "my wife has been deceived by our most holy father the pope; if she has not been, it is the priest who deceives me." There was no reply to this, and the shoemaker was acquitted. Thus did the plain sense of the people condemn these pious frauds.

One day as Tetzel was preaching at Leipsic, and mingling with his sermon some of these stories of which we have given a specimen, two students quitted the church in indignation, exclaiming: "It is impossible for us to listen any longer to this monk's jokes and puerilities." One of them, we are informed, was the youthful Camerarius, who afterwards became Melancthon's intimate friend and biographer.

But of all the young men of the age, the one on whom Tetzel made the deepest impression was doubtless Myconius, afterwards celebrated as a reformer and historian of the Reformation. He had received a christian education. "My son," his father, a pious Franconian, would often say to him, "pray frequently; for all things are given to us gratuitously from God alone. The blood of Christ," added he, "is the only ransom for the sins of the whole world. O my son, though three men only should be saved by Christ's blood, believe, and believe with assurance, that thou art one of those three men. It is an insult to the Saviour's blood to doubt that he can save." And then, cautioning his son against the traffic that was now beginning to be established in Germany: "Roman indulgences," said he again, "are nets to catch silver, and which serve to deceive the simpleminded. Remission of sins and eternal life are not to be purchased with money."

At the age of thirteen Frederick was sent to the school at Annaberg to finish his studies. Tetzel arrived in this city shortly after and remained there two years. The

people flocked in crowds to hear his sermons. "There is no other means of obtaining eternal life," cried Tetzel in a voice of thunder, "than the satisfaction of works. But this satisfaction is impossible for man. He can therefore only purchase it from the Roman pontiff."

When Tetzel was about to quit Annaberg, his sermons became more earnest. "Soon," cried he in threatening accents, "I shall take down the cross, shut the gates of heaven, and extinguish the brightness of the sun of grace that beams before your eyes." And then assuming a tender tone of exhortation: "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Again raising his voice, the priestly Stentor, who was addressing the inhabitants of a country whose wealth consisted in its mines, shouted out: "Bring your money, citizens of Annaberg! contribute bounteously in favour of indulgences, and your mines and your mountains shall be filled with pure silver!" Finally, at Whitsuntide, he declared that he would distribute his letters to the poor gratuitously, and for the love of God.

The youthful Myconius was one of Tetzel's hearers. He felt an ardent desire to take advantage of this offer. "I am a poor sinner," said he to the commissaries in Latin, "and I have need of a gratuitous pardon."—"Those alone," replied the merchants, "can have part in Christ's merits who lend a helping hand to the Church, that is to say, who give money."—"What is the meaning, then," asked Myconius, "of those promises of a free gift posted on the gates and walls of the churches?"—"Give at least a groat," said Tetzel's people, after having vainly interceded with their master in favour of the young man. "I cannot."—"Only six deniers."—"I am not worth so many." The Dominicans begin to fear that he came on purpose to entrap them. "Listen," said they, "we will make you a present of the six deniers." The young man replied indignantly: "I will have no bought indulgences. If I desired to buy them, I should only have to sell one of my schoolbooks. I desire a gratuitous pardon, and for the love of God alone. You will render an account to God for having allowed a soul to be lost for six deniers."—"Who sent you to entrap us?" exclaimed the vendors.—"Nothing but the desire of receiving God's pardon could have made me appear before such great gentlemen," replied the young man, as he withdrew.

"I was very sad at being thus sent away unpitied. But I felt, however, a comforter within me, who said that there was a God in heaven who pardons repentant souls without money and without price, for the love of his Son Jesus Christ. As I took leave of these folks, the Holy Spirit touched my heart. I burst into tears, and prayed to the Lord with anguish: O God! cried I, since these men have refused to remit my sins, because I wanted money to pay them, do thou, Lord, have pity on me, and pardon them of thy pure grace. I repaired to my chamber, I prayed to my crucifix which was

lying on my desk; I put it on a chair, and fell down before it. I cannot describe to you what I experienced. I begged God to be a father to me, and to do with me whatever he pleased. I felt my nature changed, converted, transformed. What had delighted me before, now became an object of disgust. To live with God and to please him was my earnest, my sole desire."

Thus did Tetzel himself prepare the Reformation. By flagrant abuses, he cleared the way for a purer doctrine; and the indignation he aroused in a generous youth was one day to burst forth with power. We may form some idea of this by the following anecdote.

A Saxon nobleman, who had heard Tetzel at Leipsic, was much displeased by his falsehoods. Approaching the monk, he asked him if he had the power of pardoning sins that men have an intention of committing. "Most assuredly," replied Tetzel, "I have received full powers from his holiness for that purpose."—"Well, then," answered the knight, "I am desirous of taking a slight revenge on one of my enemies, without endangering his life. I will give you ten crowns if you will give me a letter of indulgence that shall fully justify me." Tetzel made some objections; they came however to an arrangement by the aid of thirty crowns. The monk quitted Leipsic shortly after. The nobleman and his attendants lay in wait for him in a wood between Juterbock and Treblin; they fell upon him, gave him a slight beating, and took away the well-stored indulgence-chest the inquisitor was carrying with him. Tetzel made a violent outcry, and carried his complaint before the courts. But the nobleman showed the letter which Tetzel had signed himself, and which exempted him beforehand from every penalty. Duke George, whom this action had at first exceedingly exasperated, no sooner read the document than he ordered the accused to be acquitted.

This traffic everywhere occupied men's thoughts, and was everywhere talked of. It was the topic of conversation in castles, in academies, and in the burghers' houses, as well as in taverns, inns, and all places of public resort. Opinions were divided; some believed, others felt indignant. As for the sensible part of the nation, they rejected with disgust the system of indulgences. This doctrine was so opposed to the Holy Scriptures and to morality, that every man who had any knowledge of the Bible or any natural light, internally condemned it, and only waited for a signal to oppose it. On the other hand, the scoffers found ample food for raillery. The people, whom the dissolute lives of the priests, had irritated for many years, and whom the fear of punishment still kept within certain bounds, gave vent to all their hatred. Complaints and sarcasms might everywhere be heard on the love of money that devoured the clergy.

They did not stop there. They attacked the power of the keys and the authority of the sovereign pontiff. "Why," said they, "does not the pope deliver at once all the souls from purgatory by a holy charity and on account of their great wretchedness, since he delivers so many for love of perishable money and of the cathedral of St. Peter? Why are they always celebrating festivals and anniversaries for the dead? Why does not the pope restore or permit the resumption of the benefices and prebends founded in favour of the dead, since it is now useless and even reprehensible to pray for those whom the indulgences have delivered for ever? What means this new holiness of God and of the pope, that for love of money they grant to an impious man, and an enemy of God, to deliver from purgatory a pious soul, the beloved of the Lord, rather than deliver it themselves gratuitously through love, and because of its great misery?"

Stories were told of the gross and immoral conduct of the traffickers in indulgences. To pay their bills to the carriers who transported them and their merchandise, the innkeepers with whom they lodged, or whoever had done them any service, they gave a letter of indulgence for four souls, for five, or for any number according to circumstances. Thus these certificates of salvation circulated in the inns and markets like band notes or other paper money. "Pay! pay!" said the people, "that is the head, belly, tail, and all the contents of their sermons."

A miner of Schneeberg met a seller of indulgences. "Must we credit," asked he, "what you have so often told us of the power of indulgences and of the papal authority, and believe that we can, by throwing a penny into a chest, ransom a soul from purgatory?" The merchant affirmed it was so. "Ah!" resumed the miner, "what a merciless man, then, the pope must be, since for want of a wretched penny he leaves a poor soul crying in the flames so long! If he has no ready money, let him store up some hundred thousand crowns, and deliver all these souls at once. We poor people would very readily repay him both interest and capital."

The Germans were wearied with this scandalous traffic that was carried on in the midst of them. They could not longer endure the impositions of these master-cheats of Rome, as Luther called them. No bishop, no theologian, however, dared oppose their quackery and their frauds. All minds were in suspense. Men asked one another if God would not raise up some mighty man for the work that was to be done: but nowhere did he appear.

CHAPTER 3

Leo X—The Pope's Necessities—Albert—His Character—Farming the Indulgences—Franciscans and Dominicans

The pope who then sat in St. Peter's chair was not a Borgia, but Leo X of the illustrious family of the Medici. He was clever, sincere, full of gentleness and meekness. His manners were affable, his liberality unbounded, his morals superior to those of his court; Cardinal Pallavicini however acknowledges that they were not beyond reproach. To this amiable character he united many of the qualities of a great prince. He was a friend to the arts and sciences. In his presence were represented the first Italian comedies; and there were few of his time that he had not seen performed. He was passionately fond of music; every day his palace reechoed with the sound of instruments, and he was frequently heard humming the airs that had been executed before him. He loved magnificence, he spared no expense in festivals, sports, theatres, presents, or rewards. No court surpassed in splendour and in luxury that of the sovereign pontiff. Hence, when it was known that Julian Medici thought of taking up his abode at Rome with his young wife: "Thank God!" exclaimed Cardinal Bibliena, the most influential of Leo's councillors; "for nothing was wanting but a court of ladies." A court of ladies was the necessary complement of the court of the pope. But to religious feelings Leo was quite a stranger. "He possessed such charming manners," said Sarpi, "that he would have been a perfect man, if he had had some knowledge of religion and greater inclination to piety, about which he never troubled himself much."

Leo required large sums of money. He had to provide for his great expenses, find means for his extensive liberality, fill the purse of gold which he flung daily among the people, keep up the licentious shows of the Vatican, satisfy the numerous calls of his relatives and of his courtiers, who were addicted to pleasures, endow his sister who had married Prince Cibo, natural son of Pope Innocent VIII, and defray the cost of his taste for literature, the arts, and luxury. His cousin, Cardinal Pucci, who was as skilful in the science of amassing as Leo in that of squandering money, advised him to have recourse to indulgences. The pope, therefore, published a bull, announcing a general indulgence, the produce of which should be applied (said he) to the building of St. Peter's, that monument of sacerdotal magnificence. In a letter given at Rome, under the seal of the Fisherman, in November 1517, Leo requires of his commissary of indulgences 147 gold ducats, to purchase a manuscript of the thirty-third book of Livy. Of all the uses to which he applied the money of the Germans, this was undoubtedly the best. Yet it was a strange thing to deliver souls from purgatory to procure the means of purchasing a manuscript of the history of the Roman wars.

There was at that time in Germany a youthful prince who in many respects was the very image of Leo X: this was Albert, younger brother of the Elector Joachim of Brandenburg. This young man at the age of twentyour years had been created archbishop and elector of Mentz and of Magdeburg; two years later he was made cardinal. Albert had neither the virtues nor the vices that are often met with in the superior dignitaries of the church. Young, frivolous, and worldly, but not without generous sentiments, he saw clearly many of the abuses of Romanism, and cared little for the fanatical monks who surrounded him. His equity inclined him to acknowledge, in part at least, the justice of the demands of the friends of the Gospel. At the bottom of his heart he was not violently opposed to Luther. Capito, one of the most distinguished reformers, was long his chaplain, his counsellor, and his intimate confidant. Albert regularly attended at his sermons. "He did not despise the Gospel," said Capito; "on the contrary he highly esteemed it, and for a long time prevented the monks from attacking Luther." But he would have desired the latter not to compromise him, and that, while pointing out doctrinal errors and the vices of the inferior clergy, he should beware of exposing the failings of bishops and of princes.

Above all, he feared to see his name mixed up in the matter. "Consider," said the confiding Capito to Luther, deceiving himself as many have done in similar circumstances, "consider the example of Jesus Christ and of the apostles: they blamed the Pharisees and the incestuous Corinthians; but they never named the offenders. You do not know what is passing in the hearts of the bishops. There is much more good in them than perhaps you imagine." But Albert's profane and frivolous disposition, much more than the susceptibilities and fears of his self-love, was destined to alienate him from the Reformation. Affable, witty, handsome, sumptuous, extravagant, delighting in the luxuries of the table, in costly equipages, in society of literary men, this young archbishop elector was in Germany what Leo X was in Rome. His court was one of the most magnificent in the empire. He was ready to sacrifice to pleasure and to greatness all the presentiments of truth that might have stolen into his heart. Nevertheless, even to the last, he evinced a certain resistance and better convictions; more than once he gave proofs of his moderation and of his equity.

Albert, like Leo, had need of money. Some rich merchants of Augsburg, named Fugger, had made him advances. He was called upon to pay his debts. Besides, although he had monopolised two archbishoprics and one bishopric, he had not the means of paying for his pallium. This ornament, made of white wool, besprinkled with black crosses, and blessed by the pope, who sent it to the archbishops as an emblem of their dignity, cost them 26,000, or, according to some accounts, 30,000 florins. Albert very naturally formed the project of resorting to the same means as the pontiff

to obtain money. He solicited the general farming of indulgences, or, "of the sins of the Germans," as they said at Rome.

Sometimes the popes themselves worked them; at other times they farmed them, as some governments still farm gambling houses. Albert proposed sharing the profits of this business with Leo. The pope, in accepting the terms, exacted immediate payment of the price of the pallium. Albert, who was reckoning on the indulgences to meet this demand, again applied to the Fuggers, who thinking it a safe speculation made the required advance on certain conditions, and were named treasurers of this undertaking. They were the royal bankers of this epoch: they were afterwards created counts for the services they had rendered.

The pope and the archbishop having thus divided beforehand the spoils of the good souls of Germany, it was next a question who should be commissioned to realise the investment. It was at first offered to the Franciscans, and their superior was associated with Albert. But these monks wished to have no share in it, for it was already in bad odour among all good people. The Augustines, who were more enlightened than the other religious orders, cared still less about it. The Franciscans, however, feared to displease the pope, who had just sent a cardinal's hat to their general Forli,—a hat that had cost this poor mendicant order 30,000 florins. The superior judged it more prudent not to refuse openly; but he made all kinds of objections to Albert. They could never come to an understanding; and accordingly the elector joyfully accepted the proposition to take the whole matter to himself. The Dominicans, on their part, coveted a share in the general enterprise about to be set on foot. Tetzel, who had already acquired great reputation in this trade, hastened to Mentz, and offered his services to the elector. They called to mind the ability he had shown in publishing the indulgences for the knights of the Teutonic order of Prussia and Livonia; his proposals were accepted, and thus the whole traffic passed into the hands of his order.

CHAPTER 4

Tetzel approaches—Luther in the Confessional—Tetzel's Anger—Luther has no Plan—Jealousy of Orders—Luther's Sermon—The Elector's Dream

Luther, as far as we are acquainted, heard of Tetzel for the first time at Grimma in 1516, just as he was commencing his visitation of the churches. It was reported to Staupitz, who was still with Luther, that there was a seller of indulgences at Wurzen named Tetzel, who was making a great noise. Some of his extravagant expressions were quoted, and Luther exclaimed with indignation: "If God permit, I will make a hole in his drum."

Tetzel was returning from Berlin, where he had met with the most friendly reception from the Elector Joachim, the farmer general's brother, when he took his station at Juterbock. Staupitz, taking advantage of the confidence the Elector Frederick placed in him, had often called his attention to the abuses of the indulgences and the scandalous lives of the vendors. The princes of Saxony, indignant at this disgraceful traffic, had forbidden the merchant to enter their provinces. He was therefore compelled to remain in the territories of his patron the Archbishop of Magdeburg; but he approached Saxony as near as he could. Juterbock was only four miles from Wittenberg. "This great purse-thresher," said Luther, "began to thresh bravely throughout the country, so that the money began to leap and fall tinkling into the box." The people flocked in crowds from Wittenberg to the indulgence market of Juterbock.

At this period Luther was still full of respect for the Church and the pope. "It was at that time," said he, "a monk, and a most furious papist, so intoxicated, nay, so drowned in the Roman doctrines, that I would have willingly aided, if I could, in killing anyone who should have had the audacity to refuse the slightest obedience to the pope.

I was a very Saul, and there are many still." But at the same time his heart was ready to catch fire for everything that he recognised as truth, and against everything he believed to be error. "I was a young doctor fresh from the forge, ardent and rejoicing in the Word of the Lord."

Luther was one day seated in the confessional at Wittenberg. Many of the townspeople came successively, and confessed themselves guilty of great excesses. Adultery, licentiousness, usury, ill-gotten gains,—such are the crimes acknowledged to the minister of the Word by those souls of which he will have to one day give an

account. He reprimands, corrects, instructs. But what is his astonishment when these individuals reply that they will not abandon their sins? ...Greatly shocked, the pious monk declares that since they will not promise to change their lives, he cannot absolve them. The unhappy creatures then appeal to their letter of indulgence; they show them, and maintain their virtue. But Luther replies that he has nothing to do with these papers, and adds: Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. They cry out and protest; but the doctor is immovable. They must cease to do evil, and learn to do well, or else there is no absolution. "Have a care," added he, "how you listen to the clamours of these indulgence merchants: you have better things to do than buy these licenses that they sell at so vile a price."

The inhabitants of Wittenberg, in great alarm, hastily returned to Tetzel: they told him that an Augustine monk had treated his letters with contempt. The Dominican at this intelligence bellowed with anger. He stormed from the pulpit, employing insults and curses; and to strike the people with greater terror, he had a fire lighted several times in the marketplace, declaring that he had received an order from the pope to burn all heretics who presumed to oppose his most holy indulgences.

Such is the fact that was, not the cause, but the first occasion of the Reformation. A pastor, seeing the sheep of his fold in a course in which they must perish, seeks to withdraw them from it. As yet he has no thought of reforming the church and the world. He has seen Rome and her corruptions; but still he does not rise up against her. He has a presentiment of some of the abuses under which Christendom groans; but he does not think of correcting them. He does not desire to become a reformer. He has no more plans for the reformation of the Church than he had had for the reformation of himself. God wills a reform, and elects Luther to be its instrument. The same remedy which had been so efficacious in healing his own wounds, the hand of God will apply by him to the sores of Christendom.

He remains tranquil in the sphere that is assigned to him. He walks simply wherever his Master calls him. He fulfills at Wittenberg the duties of professor, preacher, and pastor. He is seated in the temple where the members of his church come and open their hearts to him. It is there—on that field—that the evil attacks him, and error seeks him out. They would prevent him from executing his office. His conscience, bound to the Word of God, revolts. Is it not God who calls him? To resist is a duty: it is therefore a right. He must speak. Thus, says Mathesius, were the events ordained by that God who desired to restore Christendom by means of the forgemaster's son, and to pass through his furnaces the impure doctrine of the Church, in order to purify it.

It is not requisite, after this statement, to refute a lying imputation, invented by some of Luther's enemies, but not till after his death. It has been said, that the jealousy peculiar to religious orders,—that vexation at seeing a disgraceful and reprobated traffic confided to the Dominicans rather than to the Augustines, who had hitherto possessed it,—led the Wittenberg professor to attack Tetzel and his doctrines. The well-established fact, that this speculation had been first offered to the Franciscans, who would have nothing to do with it, is sufficient to refute this fable repeated by writers who have copied one another. Cardinal Pallavicini himself affirms that the Augustines had never held this commission. Besides, we have witnessed the travail of Luther's soul. His conduct needs no other interpretation. It was necessary for him to confess aloud the doctrine to which he owed his happiness. In Christianity, when a man has found a treasure for himself, he desires to impart it to others. In our days we should give up these puerile and unworthy explanations of the great revolution of the 16th century. It requires a more powerful lever to raise the world. The Reformation was not in Luther only; his age must have given it birth.

Luther, who was impelled equally by obedience to the Word of God and charity towards men, ascended the pulpit. He forearmed his hearers, but with gentleness, as he says himself. His prince had obtained from the pope special indulgences for the castlechapel at Wittenberg. Some of the blows that he was aiming at the inquisitor's indulgences might fall on those of the elector. It matters not! he will hazard disgrace. If he sought to please men, he would not be Christ's servant.

"No one can prove by Scripture, that the righteousness of God requires a penalty or satisfaction from the sinner," said the faithful minister of the Word to the people of Wittenberg. "The only duty it imposes is a true repentance, a sincere conversion, a resolution to bear the cross of Christ, and to perform good works. It is a great error to pretend of oneself to make satisfaction for our sins to God's righteousness; God pardons them gratuitously by his inestimable grace.

"The Christian Church, it is true, requires something of the sinner, and which consequently can be remitted. But that is all Yet farther these indulgences of the Church are tolerated only because of the idle and imperfect Christians who will not zealously perform good works; for they move no one to sanctification, but leave each man in his imperfection."

Next attacking the pretences under which indulgences are published, he continued: "They would do much better to contribute for love of God to the building of St. Peter's, than to buy indulgences with this intention But, say you, shall we then never purchase any?....I have already told you, and I repeat it, my advice is that no

one should buy them. Leave them for drowsy Christians: But you should walk apart and for yourselves. We must turn the faithful aside from indulgences and exhort them to the works which they neglect."

Finally, glancing at his adversaries, Luther concluded in these words: "And should any cry out that I am a heretic (for the truth I preach is very prejudicial to their strong box), I care but little for their clamours. They are gloomy and sick brains, men who have never tasted the Bible, never read the christian doctrine, never comprehended their own doctors, and who lie rotting in the rags and tatters of their own vain opinions... May God grant both them and us a sound understanding! Amen." After these words the doctor quitted the pulpit, leaving his hearers in great emotion at such daring language.

This sermon was printed, and made a profound impression on all who read it. Tetzel replied to it, and Luther answered again; but these discussions did not take place till the year 1518.

The festival of All Saints was approaching. The chronicles of the time relate a circumstance, which, although of little importance to the history of this period, may still serve to characterise it. It is a dream of the elector's, the essence of which is no doubt true, although some circumstances may have been added by those who related it. A respectable writer observes, that the fear of giving his adversaries an opportunity of saying that Luther's doctrine was founded on dreams, has no doubt hindered many historians from mentioning it.

The Elector Frederick of Saxony, say the chronicles of the time, was at his palace of Schweinitz, six leagues from Wittenberg, when, on the 31st October, early in the morning, being with his brother Duke John, who was then coregent, and who reigned alone after his death, and with his chancellor, the elector said—"I must tell you of a dream, brother, which I had last night, and of which I should like to know the meaning. It is so firmly graven in my memory that I should never forget it, even were I to live a thousand years; for it came three times, and always with new circumstances."

Duke John.—"Was it a good or a bad dream?" The Elector.—"I cannot tell: God knows."

Duke John.—"Do not be uneasy about it: let me hear it."

The Elector.—"Having gone to bed last night, tired and dispirited, I soon fell asleep after saying my prayers, and slept calmly for about two hours and a half. I then awoke, and all kinds of thoughts occupied me till midnight. I reflected how I should keep the festival of All Saints; I prayed for the wretched souls in purgatory, and begged that God would direct me, my councils, and my people, according to the truth. I then fell asleep again, and dreamt that the Almighty sent me a monk, who was a true son of Paul the Apostle. He was accompanied by all the saints, in obedience to God's command, to bear him testimony, and to assure me that he did not come with any fraudulent design, but that all he should do was conformable to the will of God. They asked my gracious permission to let him write something on the doors of the palace chapel at Wittenberg, which I conceded through my chancellor.

Upon this, the monk repaired thither and began to write; so large were the characters that I could read from Schweinitz what he was writing. The pen he used was so long that its extremity reached as far as Rome, where it pierced the ears of a lion which lay there, and shook the triple crown on the pope's head. All the cardinals and princes ran up hastily and endeavoured to support it. You and I both tendered our assistance: I stretched out my arm that moment I awoke with my arm extended, in great alarm and very angry with this monk, who could not guide his pen better. I recovered myself a little it was only a dream.

"I was still half asleep, and once more closed my eyes. The dream came again. The lion, still disturbed by the pen, began to roar with all his might, until the whole city of Rome, and all the states of the Holy Empire, ran up to know what was the matter. The pope called upon us to oppose this monk, and addressed himself particularly to me, because the friar was living in my dominions. I again awoke, repeated the Lord's prayer, entreated God to preserve his holiness, and fell asleep

"I then dreamt that all the princes of the empire, and we along with them hastened to Rome, and endeavoured one after another to break this pen; but the greater our exertions, the stronger it became: it crackled as if it had been made of iron: we gave it up as hopeless. I then asked the monk (for I was now at Rome, now at Wittenberg) where he had got that pen, and how it came to be so strong. 'This pen,' replied he, 'belonged to a Bohemian goose a hundred years old. I had it from one of my old schoolmasters. It is so strong, because no one can take the pith out of it, and I am myself quite astonished at it.' On a sudden I heard a loud cry: from the monk's long pen had issued a host of other pens I awoke a third time: it was daylight."

Duke John.—"What is your opinion, Mr. Chancellor? Would that we had here a Joseph, or a Daniel, taught of God!"

The Chancellor.—"Your highnesses know the vulgar proverb, that the dreams of young women, wise men, and great lords, have generally some hidden meaning. But we shall not learn the signification of this for sometime, until the events have come to pass to which it relates. For this reason, confide its accomplishment to God, and commit all things into his hands."

Duke John.—"My opinion is the same as yours, Mr. Chancellor; it is not proper for us to rack our brains to discover the interpretation of this dream: God will direct everything to his own glory."

The Elector.—"May our faithful God do even so! Still I shall never forget this dream. I have thought of one interpretation but I shall keep it to myself. Time will show, perhaps, whether I have conjectured rightly."

Thus, according to the Weimar manuscript, passed the morning of the 31st October at Schweinitz; let us see how the evening was spent at Wittenberg. We are now returning entirely to the domain of history.

CHAPTER 5

Festival of All Saints—Theses—Their Strength—Moderation—Providence—Letter to Albert—Indifference of the Bishops—Dissemination of the Theses

Luther's words had produced little effect. Tetzel continued his traffic and his impious discourses without disturbing himself. Will Luther resign himself to these crying abuses, and will he keep silence? As pastor, he has earnestly exhorted those who had recourse to his services; as preacher, he has uttered a warning voice from the pulpit. It still remains for him to speak as a theologian; he has yet to address not merely a few souls in the confessional, not merely the assembly of the faithful at Wittenberg, but all those who are, like himself, teachers of the Word of God. His resolution is taken.

It is not the church he thinks of attacking; it is not the pope he is bringing to the bar; on the contrary, it is his respect for the pope that will not allow him to be silent longer on the monstrous claims by which the pontiff is discredited. He must take the pope's part against those imprudent men who dare mingle up his venerable name with their scandalous traffic. Far from thinking of a revolution which should overthrow the primacy of Rome, Luther believes he has the pope and catholicism for his allies against these barefaced monks.

The festival of All Saints was a very important day for Wittenberg, and, above all, for the church the elector had built there, and which he had filled with relics. On that day the priests used to bring out these relics, ornamented with gold, silver, and precious stones, and exhibit them before the people, who were astonished and dazzled at such magnificence. Whoever visited the church on that festival and made confession, obtained a rich indulgence. Accordingly, on this great anniversary, pilgrims came to Wittenberg in crowds.

On the 31st October 1517, at noon on the day preceding the festival, Luther, who had already made up his mind, walks boldly towards the church, to which a superstitious crowd of pilgrims was repairing, and posts upon the door ninetyfive theses or propositions against the doctrine of indulgences. Neither the Elector, nor Staupitz, nor Spalatin, nor any even of his most intimate friends, had been made acquainted with his intentions.

Luther therein declares, in a kind of preface, that he has written these theses with the express desire of setting the truth in the full light of day. He declares himself ready to defend them on the morrow, in the university, against all opponents. Great

was the attention they excited: they were read, and passed from mouth to mouth. Erelong the pilgrims, the university, and the whole city were in commotion.

We give some of these propositions, written with the pen of the monk, and posted on the door of the church of Wittenberg:—

1."When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ says repent, he means that the whole life of believers upon earth should be a constant and perpetual repentance.

2."This word cannot be understood of the sacrament of penance (i.e. confession and satisfaction), as administered by the priest.

3."Still the Lord does not mean to speak in this place solely of internal repentance; internal repentance is null, if it produce not externally every kind of mortification of the flesh.

4."Repentance and sorrow—i.e. true penance—endure as long as a man is displeased with himself—that is, until he passes from this life into eternity.

5."The pope is unable and desires not to remit any other penalty than that which he has imposed of his own good pleasure, or conformable to the canons—i.e. the papal ordinances.

6."The pope cannot remit any condemnation, but only declare and confirm the remission of God, except in the cases that appertain to himself. If he does otherwise, the condemnation remains entirely the same.

8."The laws of ecclesiastical penance ought to be imposed solely on the living, and have no regard to the dead.

21. "The commissaries of indulgences are in error when they say, that by the papal indulgence a man is delivered from every punishment and is saved.

25. "The same power that the pope has over purgatory throughout the Church, each bishop possesses individually in his own diocese, and each priest in his own parish.

27. "They preach mere human follies who maintain, that as soon as the money rattles in the strong box, the soul flies out of purgatory.

28. "This is certain, that as soon as the money tinkles, avarice and love of gain arrive, increase, and multiply. But the support and prayers of the Church depend solely on God's will and good pleasure.

32. "Those who fancy themselves sure of salvation by indulgences will go to perdition along with those who teach them so.

35. "They are teachers of antichristian doctrines who pretend that to deliver a soul from purgatory, or to buy an indulgence, there is no need of either sorrow or repentance.

36. "Every Christian who truly repents of his sins, enjoys an entire remission both of the penalty and of the guilt, without any need of indulgences.

37. "Every true Christian, whether dead or alive, participates in all the blessings of Christ or of the Church, by God's gift, and without a letter of indulgence.

38. "Still we should not condemn the papal dispensation and pardon; for this pardon is a declaration of the pardon of God.

40. "True repentance and sorrow seek and love the punishment; but the mildness of indulgence absolves from the punishment, and begets hatred against it.

42. "We should teach Christians that the pope has no thought or desire of comparing in any respect the act of buying indulgences with any work of mercy.

43. "We should teach Christians that he who gives to the poor, or lends to the needy, does better than he who purchases an indulgence.

44. "For the work of charity increaseth charity, and renders a man more pious; whereas the indulgence does not make him better, but only renders him more self-confident, and more secure from punishment.

45. "We should teach Christians that whoever sees his neighbour in want, and yet buys an indulgence, does not buy the pope's indulgence, but incurs God's anger.

46. "We should teach Christians that if they have no superfluity, they are bound to keep for their own households the means of procuring necessaries, and ought not to squander their money in indulgences.

47. "We should teach Christians that the purchase of an indulgence is a matter of free choice and not of commandment.

48. "We should teach Christians that the pope, having more need of prayers offered up in faith than of money, desires prayer more than money when he dispenses indulgences.

49. "We should teach Christians that the pope's indulgence is good, if we put no confidence in it; but that nothing is more hurtful, if it diminishes our piety.

50. "We should teach Christians that if the pope knew of the extortions of the preachers of indulgences, he would rather the Mother Church of St. Peter were burnt and reduced to ashes, than see it built up with the skin, the flesh, and the bones of his flock.

51. "We should teach Christians that the pope (as it is his duty) would distribute his own money to the poor whom the indulgence sellers are now stripping of their last farthing, even were he com pelled to sell the Mother Church of St. Peter.

52. "To hope to be saved by indulgences, is a lying and an empty hope; although even the commissary of indulgences, nay farther, the pope himself, should pledge their souls to guarantee it.

53. "They are the enemies of the pope and of Jesus Christ, who, by reason of the preaching of indulgences, forbid the preaching of the Word of God.

55. "The pope can have no other thought than this: If the indulgence, which is a lesser matter, be celebrated with ringing of a bell, with pomp and ceremony, much more should we honour and celebrate the Gospel, which is a greater thing, with a hundred bells, and with a hundred pomps and ceremonies.

62. "The true and precious treasure of the Church is the Holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God.

65. "The treasures of the Gospel are nets in which in former times the rich and those in easy circumstances were caught.

66. "But the treasures of the indulgence are nets with which they now catch the riches of the people.

67. "It is the duty of bishops and pastors to receive the commissaries of the apostolical indulgences with every mark of respect.

68. "But it is still more their duty to ascertain with their eyes and ears that the said commissaries do not preach the dreams of their own imagination, instead of the orders of the pope.

71. "Cursed be he who speaks against the indulgence of the pope.

72. "But blessed be he who speaks against the foolish and impudent language of the preachers of indulgences.

76. "The indulgence of the pope cannot take away the smallest daily sin, as far as regards the guilt or the offence.

79. "It is blasphemy to say that the cross adorned with the arms of the pope is as effectual as the cross of Christ.

80. "The bishops, pastors, and theologians who permit such things to be told the people, will have to render an account of them.

81. "This shameless preaching, these impudent commendations of indulgences, make it difficult for the learned to defend the dignity and honour of the pope against the calumnies of the preachers, and the subtle and crafty questions of the common people.

86. "Why, say they, does not the pope, who is richer than the richest Croesus, build the Mother Church of St. Peter with his own money, rather than with that of poor Christians?

92. "Would that we were quit of all these preachers who say to the Church: Peace! peace! and there is no peace.

94. "We should exhort Christians to diligence in following Christ, their head, through crosses, death, and hell.

95. "For it is far better to enter into the kingdom of heaven through much tribulation, than to acquire a carnal security by the consolations of a false peace."

Such was the commencement of the work. The germs of the Reformation were contained in these propositions of Luther's. The abuses of indulgences were attacked therein, and this is their most striking feature; but beneath these attacks there was a principle which, although attracting the attention of the multitude in a less degree, was one day to overthrow the edifice of popery. The evangelical doctrine of a free and gratuitous remission of sins was there for the first time publicly professed. The work must now increase in strength. It was evident, indeed, that whoever had this faith in the remission of sins, announced by the Wittenberg doctor; that whoever had this repentance, this conversion, and this sanctification, the necessity of which he so earnestly inculcated, would no longer care for human ordinances, would escape from the toils and swaddlingbands of Rome, and would acquire the liberty of the children of God.

All errors would fall down before this truth. By it, light had begun to enter Luther's mind; by it, also, the light would be diffused over the Church. A clear knowledge of this truth is what preceding reformers had wanted; and hence the unfruitfulness of their exertions. Luther himself acknowledged afterwards, that in proclaiming justification by faith, he had laid the axe to the root of the tree. "It is doctrine we attack in the adherents of the papacy," said he. "Huss and Wickliffe only attacked their lives; but in attacking their doctrine, we take the goose by the neck. Everything depends on the Word, which the pope has taken from us and falsified. I have vanquished the pope, because my doctrine is of God, and his is of the devil."

In our own days, too, we have forgotten this main doctrine of justification by faith, although in a sense opposed to that of our fathers. "In the time of Luther," observes one of our contemporaries, "the remission of sins cost money at least; but in our days, each man supplies himself gratis." There is a great similarity between these two errors. There is perhaps more forgetfulness of God in ours, than in that of the 16th century. The principle of justification by the grace of God, which brought the Church out of so much darkness at the period of the Reformation, can alone renew our generation, put an end to its doubts and waverings, destroy the selfishness that preys upon it, establish righteousness and morality among the nations, and, in short, reunite the world to God from whom it has been dissevered.

But if Luther's theses were strong by the strength of the truth they proclaimed, they were not the less so by the faith of their champion.

He had boldly drawn the sword of the Word: he had done so in reliance on the power of truth. He had felt that by leaning on God's promises, he could afford to risk something, to use the language of the world. "Let him who desires to begin a good

work," said he when speaking of this daring attack, "undertake it with confidence in the goodness of his cause, and not, which God forbid! expecting the support and consolation of the world. Moreover, let him have no fear of man, or of the whole world; for these words will never lie: It is good to trust in the Lord, and assuredly he that trusteth in the Lord shall not be confounded. But let him that will not or who cannot risk something with confidence in God, take heed how he undertakes anything." Luther, after having posted his theses on the gate of All Saints' Church, retired, no doubt, to his tranquil cell, full of the peace and joy that spring from an action done in the Lord's name, and for the sake of eternal truth.

Whatever be the boldness that prevails in these propositions, they still bespeak the monk who refuses to admit a single doubt on the authority of the see of Rome. But, while attacking the doctrine of indulgences, Luther had unwittingly touched on certain errors, whose discovery could not be agreeable to the pope, seeing that sooner or later they would call his supremacy in question. Luther was not so farsighted; but he was sensible of the extreme boldness of the step he had just taken, and consequently thought it his duty to soften down their audacity, as far as he could in conformity with the truth. He therefore set forth these theses as doubtful propositions on which he solicited the information of the learned; and appended to them, conformably with the established usage, a solemn declaration that he did not mean to affirm or say anything contrary to the Holy Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, and the rights and decretals of the Roman See.

Frequently, in after-years, as he contemplated the immense and unexpected consequences of this courageous attack, Luther was astonished at himself, and could not understand how he had ventured to make it. An invisible and mightier hand than his held the clue, and led the herald of truth along a path that was still hidden from him, and from the difficulties of which he would perhaps have shrunk, if he had foreseen them, and if he had advanced along and of his own accord. "I entered into this controversy," said he, "without any definite plan, without knowledge or inclination; I was taken quite unawares, and I call God, the searcher of hearts, to witness."

Luther had become acquainted with the source of these abuses. Some one brought him a little book, adorned with the arms of the Archbishop of Mentz and Magdeburg, which contained the regulations to be followed in the sale on indulgences. It was this young prelate, then, this graceful prince, who had prescribed, or at least sanctioned, all this quackery. In him Luther saw only a superior whom he should fear and respect. Not wishing to beat the air at hazard, but rather to address those who are charged with the government of the Church, Luther sent him a letter, abounding

at once in frankness and humility. It was on the very day he posted up the theses that the doctor wrote to Albert:—

"Pardon me, most reverend father in Christ and most illustrious prince," said he, "if I, who am but the dregs of men, have the presumption to write to your Sublime Highness. The Lord Jesus Christ is my witness that, feeling how small and despicable I am, I have long put off doing it May your Highness condescend to cast a single glance on a grain of dust, and of your episcopal mildness graciously receive my petition.

"Certain individuals are hawking the papal indulgences up and down the country, in your Grace's name. I am unwilling so much to blame the clamours of these preachers (for I have not heard them), as the false ideas of the simple and ignorant people, who, in purchasing indulgences, fancy themselves assured of salvation

"The souls intrusted to your care, most excellent Father, are taught, not unto life, but unto death. The severe and just account that will be required of you increases from day to day I could no longer be silent. No! Man is not saved by the work or the office of his bishop Even the righteous are saved with difficulty, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life. Wherefore, then, do these preachers of indulgences by their empty fables inspire the people with a carnal security?

"Indulgences alone, to hear them, ought to be proclaimed and extolled What! is it not the principal, the sole duty of the bishops to instruct the people in the Gospel, and in the charity of Christ Jesus? Christ himself has nowhere ordained the preaching of indulgences; but he has forcibly commanded the preaching of the Gospel. How dreadful, then, and how dangerous, for a bishop to allow the Gospel to be silent, and that the noise of indulgences alone should reecho incessantly in the ears of his flock!

"Most worthy Father in God, in the instructions to the commis saries, which have been published in your Grace's name (no doubt without your knowledge), it is said, that the indulgences are the most precious treasure—that by them man is reconciled to God, and that repentance is not necessary to those who purchase them.

"What can I, what ought I to do, most worthy Bishop, most serene Prince? I beg your Highness, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to cast a look of paternal vigilance on this affair, to suppress the book entirely, and to order the preachers to deliver other sermons before the people. If you do not, fear lest you should one day hear some voice uplifted in refutation of these preachers, to the great dishonour of your most serene Highness."

Luther, at the same time, forwarded his theses to the archbishop, and added a postscript inviting him to read them, in order to convince himself on how slight a foundation the doctrine of indulgences was based.

Thus, Luther's whole desire was for the sentinels of the Church to awaken and resolve to put an end to the evils that were laying it waste. Nothing could be more noble and more respectful than this letter from a monk to one of the greatest princes of the church and of the Empire. Never did man act more in accordance with this precept of Christ: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." This is not the course of those fiery revolutionists who "despise dominion and speak evil of dignities." It is the cry of a christian conscience—of a priest who gives honour to all, but who fears God above everything. All his prayers, all his entreaties were unavailing.

The youthful Albert, engrossed by pleasures and ambitious designs, made no reply to so solemn an appeal. The Bishop of Brandenburg, Luther's ordinary, a learned and pious man, to whom he sent his theses, replied that he was attacking the power of the Church; that he would bring upon himself much trouble and vexation; that the thing was above his strength; and he earnestly advised him to keep quiet. The princes of the church stopped their ears against the voice of God, which was manifested with such energy and tenderness through the mouth of Luther. They would not understand the signs of the times; they were stuck with that blindness which has caused the ruin of so many powers and dignities. "They both thought," said Luther afterwards, "that the pope would be too strong for a poor mendicant friar like me."

But Luther could judge better than the bishops of the disastrous effects of indulgences on the manners and lives of the people, for he was in direct communication with them. He saw continually and near at hand what the bishops know only through unfaithful reports. Although the bishops failed him, God did not. The Head of the Church, who sitteth in the heavens, and to whom all power is given upon earth, had himself prepared the soil and deposited the seed in the hands of his minister; he gave wings to the seeds of truth, and he scattered it in an instant throughout the length and breadth of his Church.

No one appeared next day at the university to attack Luther's propositions. The Tetzel traffic was too much decried, and too shameful, for anyone but himself or his followers to dare take up the glove. But these theses were destined to be heard elsewhere than under the arched roof of an academic hall. Scarcely had they been nailed to the church door of Wittenberg, than the feeble sounds of the hammer were

followed throughout all Germany by a mighty blow that reached even the foundations of haughty Rome, threatening with sudden ruin the walls, the gates, and pillars of popery, stunning and terrifying her champions, and at the same time awakening thousands from the sleep of error.

These theses spread with the rapidity of lightning. A month had not elapsed before they were at Rome. "In a fortnight," says a contemporary historian, "they were in every part of Germany, and in four weeks they had traversed nearly the whole of Christendom, as if the very angels had been their messengers, and had placed them before the eyes of all men. No one can believe the noise they made." Somewhat later they were translated into Dutch and Spanish, and a traveller sold them in Jerusalem. "Everyone," said Luther, "complained of the indulgences: and as all the bishops and doctors had kept silence, and nobody was willing to bell the cat, poor Luther became a famous doctor, because (as they said) there came one at last who ventured to do it. But I did not like this glory, and the tune was nearly too high for my voice."

Many of the pilgrims, who had thronged to Wittenberg from every quarter for the feast of All Saints, carried back with them, instead of indulgences, the famous theses of the Augustine monk. By this means they contributed to their circulation. Everyone read them, meditated and commented on them. Men conversed about them in all the convents and in all the universities. The pious monks, who had entered the cloisters to save their souls,—all upright and honourable men, were delighted at this simple and striking confession of the truth, and heartily desired that Luther would continue the work he had begun. At length one man had found courage to undertake the perilous struggle. This was a reparation accorded to Christendom: the public conscience was satisfied. Piety saw in these theses a blow aimed at every superstition; the new theology hailed in it the defeat of the scholastic dogmas; princes and magistrates considered them as a barrier raised against the invasions of the ecclesiastical power; and the nation rejoiced at seeing so positive a veto opposed by this monk to the cupidity of the Roman chancery.

"When Luther attacked this fable," remarked to Duke George of Saxony a man very worthy of belief, and one of the principal rivals of the reformer, namely Erasmus, "the whole world applauded, and there was a general assent." "I observe," said he at another time to Cardinal Campeggio," that the greater their evangelical piety and the purer their morals, the less are men opposed to Luther. His life is praised even by those who cannot endure his faith. The world was weary of a doctrine so full of puerile fables and human ordinances, and thirsted for that living, pure, and hidden water which springs from the veins of the evangelists and apostles. Luther's genius

was fitted to accomplish these things, and his zeal would naturally catch fire at so glorious an enterprise."

CHAPTER 6

Reuchlin—Erasmus—Flek—Bibra—The Emperor—The Pope—Myconius—The Monks—Apprehensions—Adelman—An aged Priest—The Bishop—The Elector—The Townspeople of Erfurth—Luther's Answer—Disorder—Luther's Mainspring

We must follow these propositions into whatever place they penetrated,—into the studies of the learned, the cells of the monks, and the halls of princes, to form an idea of the various but prodigious effects they produced in Germany.

Reuchlin received them. He was wearied of the rude combat he had to fight against the monks. The strength displayed by the new combatant in his theses reanimated the dispirited champion of literature, and restored joy to his desponding heart. "Thanks be to God!" exclaimed he after reading them, "at last they have found a man who will give them so much to do, that they will be compelled to let my old age end in peace."

The cautious Erasmus was in the Low Countries when these propositions reached him. He internally rejoiced at witnessing his secret wishes for the rectifying of abuses expressed with so much courage: he approved of the author, exhorting him only to greater moderation and prudence. Nevertheless, when someone reproached Luther's violence in his presence: "God," said he, "has given men a physician who cuts deep into the flesh, because the malady would otherwise be incurable." And when a little later the Elector of Saxony asked his opinion on Luther's business, he replied with a smile: "I am not at all surprised that it has made so much noise; for he has committed two unpardonable crimes; he has attacked the pope's tiara and the monks' bellies."

Doctor Flek, prior of the monastery of Steinlausitz, had long discontinued reading the Mass, but without telling anyone the real cause. One day he found Luther's theses posted up in the refectory: he went up to them, began to read, and had only perused a few, when, unable to contain his joy, he exclaimed: Ah! ah! he whom we have so long expected is come at last, and he will show you monks a trick or two!" Then looking into the future, says Mathesius, and playing on the meaning of the name Wittenberg: "All the world," said he, "will go and seek wisdom on that mountain and will find it." He wrote to the doctor to continue the glorious struggle with boldness. Luther styles him a man full of joy and consolation.

The ancient and renowned episcopal see of Wurzburg was filled at that time by Lorenzo de Bibra, a pious, wise, and worthy man, according to the testimony of his

contemporaries. When a gentleman came and informed him that he intended placing his daughter in a convent: "Rather give her a husband," said he. And then he added: "If you require money for her dowry, I will lend it you." The emperor and all the princes held him in the highest esteem. He mourned over the disorders of the Church, and above all, over those of the convents. The theses reached his palace also: he read them with great joy, and publicly declared that he approved of Luther. Somewhat later, he wrote to the Elector Frederick: "Do not let the pious Doctor Martin go, for they do him wrong." The elector was delighted at this testimony, and communicated it to the reformer with his own hand.

The Emperor Maximilian, predecessor of Charles the Fifth, read and admired the theses of the monk of Wittenberg; he perceived his ability, and foresaw that this obscure Augustine might one day become a powerful ally for Germany in her struggle against Rome. He accordingly said to the Elector of Saxony through his envoy: "Take great care of the monk Luther, for the time may come when we shall have need of him." And shortly after, being in diet with Pfeffinger, the elector's privy councillor, he said to him: "Well! what is your Augustine doing? In truth his propositions are not contemptible. He will play the monks a pretty game."

At Rome, even in the Vatican, these theses were not so badly received as might have been imagined. Leo X judged rather as a patron of letters than as pope. The amusement they gave him made him forget the severe truths they contained; and as Sylvester Prierio, the master of the sacred palace, who had the charge of examining the books, requested him to treat Luther as a heretic, he replied: "Brother Martin Luther is a very fine genius, and all that is said against him is mere monkish jealousy."

There were few men on whom Luther's theses produced a deeper impression than the scholar of Annaberg, whom Tetzel had so mercilessly repulsed. Myconius had entered a convent. On the very night of his arrival he dreamt he saw immense fields of wheat all glistening with ripe ears. "Cut," said the voice of his guide; and when he alleged his want of skill, his conductor showed him a reaper working with inconceivable activity. "Follow him, and do as he does," said the guide. Myconius, as eager after holiness as Luther had been, devoted himself while in the monastery to all the vigils, fasts, mortifications, and practices invented by men. But at last he despaired of ever attaining his object by his own exertions. He neglected his studies, and employed himself in manual labours only. At one time he would bind books; at another, work at the turner's lathe, or any laborious occupation. This outward activity was unable to quiet his troubled conscience. God had spoken to him, and he could no longer fall back into his previous lethargy. This state of anguish endured several years. It has been sometimes imagined that the paths of the reformers were smooth,

and that when they had renounced the observances of the Church, nothing but pleasure and comfort awaited them. It is not considered that they arrived at the truth through internal struggles a thousand times more painful than the observances to which slavish minds easily submitted.

At length the year 1517 arrived; Luther's theses were published; they were circulated through Christendom, and penetrated also into the monastery where the scholar of Annaberg was concealed. He hid himself in a corner of the cloister with another monk, John Voigt; that he might read them at his ease. Here were the self-same truths he had heard from his father; his eyes were opened; he felt a voice within him responding to that which was then reechoing through Germany, and great consolation filled his heart. "I see plainly," said he, "that Martin Luther is the reaper I saw in my dream, and who taught me to gather the ears." He began immediately to profess the doctrine that Luther had proclaimed. The monks grew alarmed, as they heard him; they argued with him, and declared against Luther and against his convent. "This convent," replied Myconius, "is like our Lord's sepulchre: they wish to prevent Christ's resurrection, but they will fail." At last his superiors, finding they could not convince him, interdicted him for a year and a half from all intercourse with the world, permitting him neither to write nor receive letters, and threatening him with imprisonment for life. But the hour of his deliverance was at hand. Being afterwards nominated pastor of Zwickau, he was the first who declared against the papacy in the churches of Thuringia. "Then," said he, "was I enabled to labour with my venerable father Luther in the Gospel harvest." Jonas describes him as a man capable of doing everything he undertook.

No doubt there were others besides to whose souls Luther's propositions were a signal of life. They kindled a new flame in many cells, cottages, and palaces. While those who had entered the convents in quest of good cheer an idle life, or respect and honours, says Mathesius, began to load the name of Luther with reproaches, the monks who lived in prayer, fasting, and mortification, returned thanks to God, as soon as they heard the cry of that eagle whom Huss had announced a century before. Even the common people, who did not clearly understand the theological question, but who only knew that this man assailed the empire of the lazy and mendicant monks, welcomed him with bursts of acclamation. An immense sensation was produced in Germany by these daring propositions. Some of the reformer's contemporaries, however, foresaw the serious consequences to which they might lead, and the numerous obstacles they would encounter. They expressed their fears aloud, and rejoiced with trembling.

"I am much afraid," wrote the excellent canon of Augsburg, Bernard Adelmann, to his friend Pirckheimer, "that the worthy man must give way at last before the avarice and power of the partisans of indulgences. His representations have produced so little effect, that the Bishop of Augsburg, our primate and metropolitan, has just ordered, in the pope's name, fresh indulgences for St. Peter's at Rome. Let him haste to secure the aid of princes; let him beware of tempting God; for he must be void of common sense if he overlooks

the imminent peril he incurs." Adelmann was delighted on hearing it rumoured that Henry VIII had invited Luther to England. "In that country," thought the canon, "he will be able to teach the truth in peace." Many thus imagined that the doctrine of the Gospel required the support of the civil power. They knew not that it advances without this power, and is often trammelled and enfeebled by it.

Albert Kranz, the famous historian, was at Hamburg on his deathbed, when Luther's theses were brought to him: "Thou art right, Brother Martin," said he; "but thou wilt not succeed. Poor monk! Go to thy cell and cry: Lord! have mercy upon me!"

An aged priest of Hexter in Westphalia, having received and read the theses in his parsonage, shook his head and said in Low German: "Dear Brother Martin! if you succeed in overthrowing this purgatory and all these paperdealers, you will be a fine fellow indeed! Erbenius, who lived a century later, wrote the following doggerel under these words:—

"What would the worthy parson say, If he were living at this day?"

Not only did a great number of Luther's friends entertain fears as to this proceeding, but many even expressed their disapprobation.

The Bishop of Brandenburg, grieved at seeing so violent a quarrel break out in his diocese, would have desired to stifle it. He resolved to effect this by mildness. "In your theses on indulgences," said he to Luther, through the Abbot of Lenin, "I see nothing opposed to the Catholic truth; I myself condemn these indiscreet proclamations; but for the love of peace and for regard to your bishop, discontinue writing upon this subject." Luther was confounded at being addressed with such humility by so great a dignitary. Led away by the first impulse of his heart, he replied with emotion: "I consent: I would rather obey than perform miracles if that were possible."

The elector beheld with regret the commencement of a combat that was justifiable no doubt, but the results of which could not be foreseen. No prince was more desirous of maintaining the public peace than Frederick. Yet, what an immense conflagration might not be kindled by this spark! What violent discord, what rending of nations, might not this monkish quarrel produce! The elector gave Luther frequent intimations of the uneasiness he felt.

Even in his own order and in his own convent at Wittenberg, Luther met with disapprobation. The prior and subprior were terrified at the outcry made by Tetzel and his companions. They repaired trembling and alarmed to Brother Martin's cell, and said: "Pray do not bring disgrace upon our order! The other orders, and especially the Dominicans, are already overjoyed to think that they will not be alone in their shame." Luther was moved at these words; but he soon recovered, and replied: "Dear fathers! if this work be not of God, it will come to naught; but if it be, let it go forwards." The prior and subprior made no answer. "The work is still going forwards," added Luther, after recounting this anecdote, "and, God willing, it will go on better and better into the end. Amen."

Luther had many other attacks to endure. At Erfurth, he was blamed for the violent and haughty manner in which he condemned the opinions of others: this is the reproach usually made against those men who possess that strength of conviction which proceeds from the Word of God. He was also accused of precipitation and levity.

"They require moderation in me," answered Luther, "and they trample it under foot in the judgment they pass on me! We can always see the mote in our brother's eye, and we overlook the beam in our own Truth will not gain more by my moderation, than it will lose by my rashness. I desire to know (continues he, addressing Lange) what errors you and your theologians have found in my theses? Who does not know that a man rarely puts forth any new idea without having some appearance of pride, and without being accused of exciting quarrels? If humility herself should undertake something new, her opponents would accuse her of pride! Why were Christ and all the martyrs put to death? Because they seemed to be proud condemners of the wisdom of the time, and because they advanced novelties, without having first humbly taken counsel of the oracles of the ancient opinions.

"Do not let the wise of our days expect from me humility, or rather hypocrisy, enough to ask their advice, before publishing what duty compels me to say. Whatever I do will be done, not by the prudence of men, but by the counsel of God. If the work be of God, who shall stop it? if it be not, who can forward it? Not my will, nor theirs, nor ours; but thy will, O Holy Father, which art in heaven."—What courage, what

noble enthusiasm, what confidence in God, and above all, what truth in these words, and what truth for all ages!

The reproaches and accusations which were showered upon Luther from every quarter, could not fail, however, to produce some impression on his mind. He had been deceived in his hopes. He had expected to see the heads of the Church and the most distinguished scholars in the nation publicly unite with him; but the case was far otherwise. A word of approbation which escaped in the first moment of astonishment was all the best disposed accorded him; on the contrary, many whom he had hitherto respected the most, were loudest in their censure. He felt himself alone in the Church, alone against Rome, alone at the foot of that ancient and formidable building whose foundations penetrated to the centre of the earth, whose walls soared to the clouds, and against which he had aimed so daring a blow. He was troubled and dispirited. Doubts, which he fancied he had overcome, returned to his mind with fresh force. He trembled at the thought that he had the whole authority of the Church against him: to withdraw from that authority, to be deaf to that voice which people had obeyed for centuries, to set himself in opposition to that Church which he had been accustomed from his infancy to venerate as the mother of the faithful, he, an insignificant monk was an effort too great for human power! No step cost him dearer than this. And it was this, accordingly, which decided the Reformation.

No one can paint better than himself the combat in his own soul:—"I began this business," said he, "with great fear and trembling. Who was I then, I, a poor, wretched, contemptible friar, more like a corpse than a man; who was I to oppose the majesty of the pope, before whom not only the kings of the earth and the whole world trembled, but even, if I may so speak, heaven and hell were constrained to obey the signal of his eyes? No one can know what my heart suffered during these first two years, and into what despondency, I may say into what despair, I was sunk. Those haughty spirits who have since attacked the pope with such great hardihood can form no idea of it, although with all their skill they would have been unable to do him the least harm, if Jesus Christ had not already inflicted through me, his weak and unworthy instrument, a wound that shall never be healed But while they were content to look on and leave me alone in the danger, I was not so cheerful, so tranquil, nor so confident; for at that time I was ignorant of many things which now, thank God, I know.

There were, it is true, many pious Christians who were pleased with my propositions, and valued them highly; but I could not acknowledge them and consider them as the instruments of the Holy Ghost; I looked only to the pope, to the cardinals,

bishops, theologians, lawyers, monks, and priests It was from them I expected to witness the influence of the Spirit. However, after gaining the victory over all their argument by Scripture, I at last surmounted through Christ's grace, but with great anguish, toil, and pain, the only argument that still checked me, namely that I should "listen to the Church;" for, from the bottom of my heart, I reverenced the pope's Church as the true Church; and I did so with far more sincerity and veneration than all those scandalous and infamous corrupters who, to oppose me, now extol it so mightily. If I had despised the pope, as those men really despise him in their hearts who praise him so much with their lips, I should have trembled lest the earth should have instantly opened and swallowed me up alive like Korah and his company."

How honourable are these combats to Luther! What sincerity, what uprightness of mind they display! and by these painful assaults which he had to sustain from within and from without, he is rendered more worthy of our esteem that he would have been by an intrepidity unaccompanied by any such struggles. This travail of his soul clearly demonstrates the truth and Divinity of his work. We see that the cause and the principle were both in heaven. Who will dare assert, after all the features we have pointed out, that the Reformation was a political affair? No; it was not the effect of man's policy, but of God's power. If Luther had been urged forward solely by human passions, he would have sunk under his fears; his errors, his scruples, would have smothered the fire kindled in his soul; and he would have shed upon the Church a mere passing ray, as many zealous and pious men have done whose names have been handed down to us. But now God's time was come; the work could not be stopped; the emancipation of the Church must be accomplished. Luther was appointed at least to prepare the way for that complete enfranchisement and those extensive developments which are promised to the reign of Jesus Christ. He experienced, accordingly, the truth of that glorious promise: Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles. That Divine power which filled the heart of the Wittenberg doctor, and which had impelled him to the combat, soon restored to him all his early resolution.

CHAPTER 7

Tetzel's Attack—Luther's Reply—Good Works—Luther and Spalatin—Study of Scripture—Scheurl and Luther—Doubts on the Theses—Luther pleads for the People—A New Coat

The reproaches, the timidity, and the silence of his friends had discouraged Luther; the attacks of his enemies produced a contrary effect: this is a case of frequent occurrence. The adversaries of the truth, who hope by their violence to do their own work, are doing that of God himself. Tetzel took up the gauntlet, but with a feeble hand. Luther's sermon, which had been for the people what the theses had been for the learned, was the object of his first reply. He refuted this discourse point by point, after his own fashion; he then announced that he was preparing to meet his adversary more fully in certain theses which he would maintain at the university of Frankforton the Oder. "Then," said he, replying to the conclusion of Luther's sermon, "each man will be able to judge who is the heresiarch, heretic, schismatic; who is mistaken, rash, and slanderous. Then it will be clear to the eyes of all who it is that has a dull brain, that has never felt the Bible, never read the christian doctrines, never understood his own doctors In support of the propositions I advance, I am ready to suffer all things—prisons, scourging, drowning, and the stake."

One thing strikes us, as we read Tetzel's reply—the difference between the German employed by him and Luther. One might say they were several ages apart. A foreigner, in particular, sometimes finds it difficult to understand Tetzel, while Luther's language is almost entirely that of our own days. A comparison of their writings is sufficient to show that Luther is the creator of the German language. This is, no doubt, one of his least merits, but still it is one.

Luther replied without naming Tetzel; Tetzel had not named him. But there was no one in Germany who could not write at the head of their publications the names they thought proper to conceal. Tetzel, in order to set a higher value upon his indulgences, endeavoured to confound the repentance required by God with the penance imposed by the Church. Luther sought to clear up this point.

"To save words," said he, in his picturesque language, "I throw to the winds (which, besides, have more leisure than I) his other remarks, which are mere artificial flowers and dry leaves, and will content myself with examining the foundations of his edifice of burs.

"The penance imposed by the holy father cannot be that required by Christ; for what the holy father imposes he can dispense with; and if these two penances were one and the same thing, it would follow that the pope takes away what Christ imposes, and destroys the commandment of God Well! if he likes it, let him abuse me (continues Luther, after quoting other erroneous interpretations by Tetzel), let him call me heretic, schismatic, slanderer, and whatever he pleases: I shall not be his enemy for that, and I shall pray for him as for a friend But I cannot suffer him to treat the Holy Scriptures, our consolation (Romans 15:4), as a sow treats a sack of oats."

We must accustom ourselves to find Luther sometimes making use of coarse expressions, and such are too familiar for our age: it was the fashion of the times; and there will generally be found under these words, which would now shock the conventional usages of language, a strength and propriety which redeem their vulgarity. He thus continues:—

"He who purchases indulgences, repeat our adversaries, does better than he who gives alms to a poor man who is not reduced to the last extremity.—Now, should we hear the news that the Turks are profaning our churches and our crosses, we could hear it without shuddering; for we have in the midst of us the worst of Turks, who profane and annihilate the only real sanctuary, the Word of God, that sanctifieth all things.—Let him who desires to follow this precept, beware of feeding the hungry, or of clothing the naked, before they die, and consequently have no more need of assistance."

It is important to compare Luther's zeal for good works with what he says on justification by faith. The man that has any experience and any knowledge of Christianity, does not require this new proof of a truth, the evidence of which he had himself felt: namely, the more we are attached to justification by faith, the more we see the necessity of works, and the more we become attached to their practice; while any laxity with regard to the doctrine of faith necessarily brings with it laxity of morals. Luther, and Saint Paul before him and Howard after him, are proofs of the first assertion; every man without faith, and there are many such in the world, is a proof of the second.

When Luther comes to Tetzel's invectives, he answers them in this manner. "When I hear these invectives, I fancy it is an ass braying at me. I am delighted with them, and I should be very sorry were such people to call me a good Christian." We must represent Luther as he was, with all his weaknesses. A turn for jesting, and even for coarse jesting, was one of them. The Reformer was a great man, a man of

God, no doubt; but he was still a man and not an angel, and he was not even a perfect man. Who has the right to require perfection in him?

"Finally," added he, challenging his adversary to battle, "although it is not usual to burn heretics for such matters, here am I at Wittenberg, I, Doctor Martin Luther! Is there any inquisitor who is determined to chew iron and to blow up rocks? I beg to inform him that he has a safe-conduct to come hither, open gates, bed and board secured to him, and all by the gracious cares of our worthy prince, Duke Frederick, elector of Saxony, who will never protect heresy."

We see that Luther was not wanting in courage. He relied upon the Word of God; and it is a rock that never fails us in the storm. But God in his faithfulness afforded him other assistance. The burst of joy by which the multitude welcomed Luther's theses, had been soon followed by a gloomy silence. The learned had timidly retreated before the calumnies and abuse of Tetzel and the Dominicans. The bishops, who had previously exclaimed against the abuse of indulgences, seeing them attacked at last, had not failed, by a contradiction that is by no means rare, to discover that the attack was unseasonable. The greater portion of the reformer's friends were alarmed. Many had fled away. But when the first terror was over, a contrary movement took place in their minds. The monk of Wittenberg, who for sometime had been almost alone in the midst of the Church, soon gathered around him again a numerous body of friends and admirers.

There was one who, although timid, yet remained faithful during this crisis, and whose friendship was his consolation and support. This was Spalatin. Their correspondence was not interrupted. "I thank you," said Luther, speaking of a particular mark of friendship that he had received, "but what am I not indebted to you?" It was on the 11th November 1517, eleven days after the publication of the theses, and consequently at the very time when the fermentation of men's minds was greatest, that Luther delighted thus to pour out his gratitude into his friend's heart. It is interesting to witness in this very letter to Spalatin, this strong man, who had just performed the bravest action, declaring whence all his strength was derived. "We can do nothing of ourselves: we can do everything by God's grace. All ignorance is invincible for us: no ignorance is invincible for the grace of God. The more we endeavour, of ourselves, to attain wisdom, the nearer we approach to folly. It is untrue that this invincible ignorance excuses the sinner; otherwise there would be no sin in the world."

Luther had not sent his propositions either to the prince or to any of his court. It would appear that the chaplain expressed some astonishment to his friend in

consequence. "I was unwilling," replied Luther, "that my theses should reach our most illustrious prince, or any of his court, before they had been received by those who think themselves especially designated in them, for fear they should believe I had published them by the prince's order, or to conciliate his favour, and from opposition to the Bishop of Mentz. I understand there are many persons who dream such things. But now I can safely swear, that my theses were published without the knowledge of Duke Frederick."

If Spalatin consoled his friend and supported him by his influence, Luther, on his part, endeavoured to answer the questions put to him by the unassuming chaplain. Among others, the latter asked one that has been often proposed in our days: "What is the best method of studying Scripture?"

"As yet, most excellent Spalatin," Luther replied, "you have only asked me things that were in my power. But to direct you in the study of the Holy Scriptures is beyond my ability. If, however, you absolutely wish to know my method, I will not conceal it from you.

"It is very certain, that we cannot attain to the understanding of Scripture either by study or by the intellect. Your first duty is to begin by prayer. Entreat the Lord to grant you, of his great mercy, the true understanding of his Word. There is no other interpreter of the Word of God than the Author of this Word, as he himself has said: They shall be all taught of God. Hope for nothing from your own labours, from your own understanding: trust solely in God, and in the influence of his Spirit. Believe this on the word of a man who has had experience." We here see how Luther arrived at the possession of the truth which he preached. It was not, as some pretend, by trusting to a presumptuous reason; it was not, as others maintain, by giving way to malignant passions. The purest, the sublimest, the holiest source—God himself, consulted in humility, confidence, and prayer,—was that at which he drank. But in our days he has found few imitators, and hence it is there are not many who understand him. To every serious mind these words of Luther's are of themselves a justification of the Reformation.

Luther found further consolation in the friendship of respectable laymen. Christopher Scheurl, the excellent secretary of the imperial city of Nuremberg, gave him the most affecting marks of his regard. We know how dear are the expressions of sympathy to a man's heart when he sees himself attacked on every side. The secretary of Nuremberg did still more: he desired to increase the number of Luther's friends, and with this intent requested him to dedicate one of his works to Jerome Ebner, a celebrated Nuremberg lawyer. "You entertain a high opinion of my studies," modestly

answered the reformer; "but I have a very mean one of them. Nevertheless, I have desired to conform with your wishes. I have sought but among all my stores, that I have never found so paltry before, nothing presented itself that did not appear utterly unworthy of being dedicated to so great a man by so mean a person as myself." Affecting humility! It is Luther who speaks, and it is to Doctor Ebner, whose name is unknown to us, that he compares himself. Posterity has not ratified this decision.

Luther, who had done nothing to circulate his theses, had not sent them to Scheurl any more than to the Elector and his court. The secretary of Nuremberg expressed his astonishment at this. "My design," answered Luther, "was not to give my theses such publicity. I only desired to confer on their contents with some of those who remain with us or near us. If they had been condemned, I would have destroyed them. If they had been approved of, I purposed publishing them. But they have now been printed over and over again, and circulated so far beyond all my hopes, that I repent of my offspring; not because I fear the truth should be made known to the people, 'twas this alone I sought; but that is not the way to instruct them. They contain questions that are still doubtful to me, and if I had thought my theses would have created such a sensation, there are somethings I should have omitted, and others I should have asserted with greater confidence." In after-years Luther thought differently. Far from fearing he had said too much, he declared that he ought to have said much more. But the apprehensions he manifested to Scheurl do honour to his sincerity. They show that he had no premeditated plan, no party spirit, no selfconceit, and that he sought for truth alone. When he had discovered it fully, he changed his tone. "You will find in my earlier writings," said he many years after, "that I very humbly conceded many things to the pope, and even important things, that now I regard and detest as abominable and blasphemous."

Scheurl was not the only respectable layman who, at this time, gave testimony of his friendship for Luther. The celebrated painter, Albert Durer, sent him a present, perhaps one of his pictures, and the doctor warmly expressed his gratitude for the kindness.

Thus Luther practically experienced the truth of these words of Divine Wisdom: A friend loveth at all times; and a brother is born for adversity. But he remembered them also for others, and pleaded the cause of the whole nation. The elector had just imposed one tax, and there was a talk of another, probably by the advice of his counsellor Pfeffinger, against whom Luther often vented his biting sarcasms. The doctor boldly placed himself in the breach: "Let not your highness despise the prayer of a poor beggar," said he. "I beseech you, in God's name, not to impose a new tax. My heart was bruised as well as the hearts of many of those who are most devoted to you,

when they saw how far the last had injured your good fame, and the popularity your highness enjoyed. It is true that the Lord has given you an exalted understanding, so that you see into these matters farther than I or your subjects can. But perhaps it is God's will that a mean understanding should instruct a greater, in order that no one should trust to himself, but solely in the Lord our God, whom I pray to preserve your health of body for our good, and your soul for eternal blessedness. Amen." Thus it is that the Gospel, which calls upon us to honour kings, makes us also plead the cause of the people. To a nation it proclaims its duties; and reminds the prince of his subject's rights. The voice of a Christian like Luther, resounding in the cabinet of a sovereign, might often supply the place of a whole assembly of legislators.

In this same letter, in which Luther addresses a severe lesson to the elector, he does not fear to make a request, or rather to remind him of a promise to give him a new coat. This freedom of Luther, at a time when he might fear he had displeased Frederick, does equal honour to the prince and to the reformer. "But if it is Pfeffinger who has charge of it," added he, "let him give it me in reality, not in protestations of friendship. He knows how to spin fine speeches, but they never produce good cloth." Luther imagined that by the faithful counsel he had given his prince, he had well earned his courtdress. But, however that may be, he had not received it two years after, and he asked for it again. This seems to indicate that Frederick was not so much influenced by Luther as has been supposed.

CHAPTER 8

Frankfort Discussion—Tetzel's Theses—Menaces—Knipstrow's Opposition—Luther's Theses burnt—The Monks—Luther's Peace—Tetzel's Theses burnt—Grief of Luther

Men's minds had thus recovered a little from their first alarm. Luther himself felt inclined to declare that his theses had not the scope attributed to them. New events might turn aside the general attention, and this blow aimed at the Romish doctrine be lost in air like so many others. But the partisans of Rome prevented the affair from ending thus. They fanned the flame instead of quenching it.

Tetzel and the Dominicans replied with insolence to the attack that had been made on them. Burning with the desire of crushing the impudent monk who had dared to trouble their commerce, and of conciliating the favour of the Roman pontiff, they uttered a cry of rage; they maintained that to attack the indulgence ordained by the pope, was to attack the pope himself, and they summoned to their aid all the monks and divines of their school. Tetzel indeed felt that an adversary like Luther was too much for him alone. Greatly disconcerted at the doctor's attack, and exasperated to the highest degree, he quitted the vicinity of Wittenberg, and repaired to FrankfortontheOder, where he arrived in the month of November 1517. The university of this city, like that of Wittenberg, was of recent date; but it had been founded by the opposite party. Conrad Wimpina, an eloquent man, the ancient rival of Pollich of Mellerstadt, and one of the most distinguished theologians of the age, was a professor there. Wimpina cast an envious glance on the doctor and university of Wittenberg. Their reputation galled him. Tetzel requested him to answer Luther's theses, and Wimpina wrote two lists of antitheses, the object of the first being to defend the doctrine of indulgences, and the second, the authority of the pope.

On the 20th January 1518 took place that disputation prepared so long beforehand, announced with so much pomp, and on which Tetzel founded such great hopes. On every side he had beaten up for recruits. Monks had been sent from all the cloisters in the neighbourhood, and they met to the number of about three hundred. Tetzel read his theses. They even contained this declaration, "that whoever says that the soul does not escape out of purgatory so soon as the money tinkles in the chest, is in error."

But above all, he put forward propositions according to which the pope seemed actually seated as God in the temple of God, according to the apostle's expression. It

was convenient for this shameless trafficker to take shelter, with all his disorders and scandals, under the mantle of the pope.

He declared himself ready to maintain the following propositions before the numerous assembly by which he was surrounded:—

3."We should teach Christians that the pope, by the greatness of his power, is above the whole universal Church, and superior to the councils, and that we should implicitly obey his decrees.

4."We should teach Christians that the pope alone has the right of deciding in all matters of christian faith; that he alone and no one besides him has power to interpret the meaning of Scripture according to his own views, and to approve or condemn all the words or writings of other men.

5."We should teach Christians that the judgment of the pope cannot err, in matters concerning the christian faith, or which are necessary to the salvation of the human race.

6."We should teach Christians that, in matters of faith, we should rely and repose more on the pope's sentiments, as made known by his decisions, than on the opinions of all the learned, which are derived merely from Scripture.

8."We should teach Christians that those who injure the honour or dignity of the pope, are guilty of high treason, and deserve to be accursed.

17. "We should teach Christians that there are many things which the Church regards as indisputable articles of universal truth, although they are not to be found in the canon of the Bible or in the writings of the ancient doctors.

44. "We should teach Christians to regard as obstinate heretics all who declare by their words, acts, or writings, that they will not retract their heretical propositions, even should excommunication after excommunication fall upon them like hail or rain.

48. "We should teach Christians that those who protect the errors of heretics, and who, by their authority prevent them from being brought before the judge who has a right to hear them, are excommunicated; that if in the space of a year they do not change their conduct, they will be declared infamous, and cruelly punished with divers chastisements, according to the law, and for a warning to other men.

50. "We should teach Christians that those who scribble so many books and waste so much paper, who dispute and preach publicly and wickedly about oral confession, the satisfaction of works, the rich and great indulgences of the Bishop of Rome, and his power; that the persons who take part with those who preach or write such things, who are pleased with their writings, and circulate them among the people and over the world; that those who speak in private of these things, in a contemptuous and shameless manner—should expect to incur the penalties before mentioned, and to precipitate themselves, and others with them, into eternal condemnation at the judgment day, and into merited disgrace even in this world. For 'if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned.'"

We see that Tetzel did not attack Luther only. He probably had the Elector of Saxony in view in his 48th thesis. These propositions, besides, savour strongly of the Dominican. To threaten every contradictor with cruel punishments, was the argument of an inquisitor, to which there were no means of replying. The three hundred monks whom Tetzel had collected stared and listened with admiration to what he had said. The theologians of the university were too fearful of being ranked with the abettors of heresy, or else were too strongly attached to Wimpina's principles, openly to attack the astonishing theses that had just been read.

All this affair, about which there had been so much noise, seemed then destined to be a mere sham fight; but among the crowd of students present at the disputation was a youth about twenty years of age, named John Knipstrow. He had read Luther's theses, and had found them conformable to the doctrines of Scripture. Indignant at beholding the truth publicly trodden under foot, without anyone appearing in its defence, this young man raised his voice, to the great astonishment of all the assembly, and attacked the presumptuous Tetzel. The poor Dominican, who had not reckoned on any opposition, was quite confused. After a few exertions, he deserted the field of battle, and gave way to Wimpina. The latter resisted more vigorously; but Knipstrow pressed him so closely, that, to finish a struggle so unbecoming in his eyes, the president (Wimpina himself) declared the disputation over, and immediately proceeded to confer the degree of doctor upon Tetzel in recompense of this glorious combat. In order to get rid of the young orator, Wimpina had him sent to the convent of Pyritz in Pomerania, with an order that he should be strictly watched. But this dawning light was removed from the banks of the Oder, only to diffuse not long after a greater brilliancy throughout Pomerania. When God thinks fit, he employs even learners to confound the teachers.

Tetzel, wishing to retrieve the check he had experienced had recourse to the ultima ratio of Rome and of the inquisitors,—to fire. He caused a pulpit and a scaffold

to be erected in one of the public walks in the environs of Frankfort. Thither he repaired in solemn procession, with his insignia of inquisitor of the faith. He gave vent to all his violence from the pulpit. He hurled thunderbolts, and exclaimed with his stentorian voice, that the heretic Luther deserved to suffer death at the stake. Next, placing the doctor's propositions and sermon on the scaffold, he burnt them. He knew better how to do this than to maintain his theses. At this time he met with no gainsayers: his victory was complete. The impudent Dominican re-entered Frankfort in triumph. When powerful parties are vanquished, they have recourse to certain demonstrations, which we may well accord to them as some consolation for their disgrace.

These second theses of Tetzel's form an important epoch in the Reformation. They changed the ground of dispute: they transported it from the indulgence markets to the halls of the Vatican, and diverted it from Tetzel to the pope. In the place of that despicable broker whom Luther had so firmly grasped, they substituted the sacred person of the head of the Church. Luther was filled with astonishment. It is probable that he would erelong have taken this step himself; but his enemies spared him the trouble. It was henceforward no question of a discredited traffic, but of Rome itself; and the blow by which a daring hand had tried to demolish Tetzel's shop, shook the very foundations of the pontifical throne.

Tetzel's theses served as a rallying cry to the troops of Rome. An uproar against Luther broke out among the monks, infuriate at the appearance of a more formidable adversary than either Reuchlin or Erasmus. Luther's name resounded everywhere from the pulpits of the Dominicans, who addressed themselves to the passions of the people. They called the bold doctor a madman, a seducer, and a demoniac. His doctrine was cried down as the most horrible heresy. "Only wait a fortnight, or a month at most," said they, "and this notorious heretic will be burnt." If it had depended solely on the Dominicans, the fate of Jerome and of Huss would soon have been that of the Saxon doctor also; but God was watching over him.

His life was destined to accomplish what the ashes of the Bohemian reformer had begun; for each does the work of God, one by his death, the other by his life. Many began already to exclaim that the whole university of Wittenberg was deeply tainted with heresy, and pronounced it infamous. "Let us drive out that villain and all his partisans," continued they. In many places these cries succeeded in exciting the passions of the multitude. The public attention was directed against those who shared Luther's opinions; and wherever the monks were the strongest, the friends of the Gospel experienced the effects of their hatred. It was thus, with regard to the Reformation, that our Saviour's prophecy began to be accomplished: Men will revile

you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. In every age this is the recompense bestowed by the world on the decided friends of the Gospel.

When Luther was informed of Tetzel's theses, and of the general attack of which they were the signal, his courage immediately took fire. He felt the necessity of opposing such adversaries face to face; and his intrepid soul had no difficulty in coming to such a decision. But at the same time their weakness revealed to him his own strength, and inspired him with the consciousness of what he really was.

He did not, however, give way to those sentiments of pride so natural to man's heart. "I have more difficulty to refrain from despising my adversaries," wrote he about this time to Spalatin, "and from sinning in this way against Jesus Christ, than I should have in conquering them. They are so ignorant of human and divine things, that it is disgraceful to have to fight against them. And yet it is this very ignorance which gives them their inconceivable arrogance and their brazen face." But the strongest encouragement to his heart, in the midst of this general hostility, was the intimate conviction that his cause was that of truth. "Do not be surprised," wrote he to Spalatin at the beginning of 1518, "that I am so grossly insulted. I listen to their abuse with joy. If they did not curse me, we could not be so firmly assured that the cause I have undertaken is that of God himself. Christ has been set up for a sign to be spoken against." "I know," said he on another occasion, "that from the very beginning of the world, the Word of God has been of such a nature, that whoever desired to publish it to the world has been compelled, like the Apostles, to abandon all things, and to expect death. If it were not so, it would not be the Word of Jesus Christ." This peace in the midst of agitation is a thing unknown to the heroes of the world. We see men who are at the head of a government, or of a political party, sink under their toils and vexations. The Christian generally acquires new vigour in his struggle. It is because he possesses a mysterious source of repose and of courage unknown to him whose eyes are closed against the Gospel.

One thing, however, sometimes agitated Luther: the thought of the dissensions his courageous opposition might produce. He knew that a single word might set the world on fire. At times his imagination beheld prince arrayed against prince, and perhaps people against people. His patriotic heart was saddened; his christian charity alarmed. He would have desired peace; and yet he must speak, for such was the Lords's will. "I tremble," said he, "I shudder at the idea that I may be an occasion of discord between such mighty princes."

He still kept silence with regard to Tetzel's propositions concerning the pope. Had he been carried away by passion, he would, no doubt, have instantly fallen upon that astonishing doctrine, under the shelter of which his adversary sought to protect himself. But he did not; and in his delay, his reserve and silence, there is something grave and solemn, which sufficiently reveals the spirit that animated him. He waited, but not from weakness: for the blow was all the stronger.

Tetzel, after his autodafe at Frankfort, had hastened to send his theses into Saxony. They will serve as an antidote (thought he) against Luther's. A man from Halle, commissioned by the inquisitor to circulate his theses, arrived at Wittenberg. The students of the university, still indignant that Tetzel should have burnt their master's propositions, had scarcely heard of his arrival, before they sought him out, surrounded him, mobbed and frightened him. "How can you dare bring such things here?" said they. Some of them bought part of the copies he had with him, others seized the remainder. They thus became masters of his whole stock, amounting to eight hundred copies; and then, unknown to the elector, the senate, the rector, Luther, and all the professors, they posted the following words on the university boards: "Whoever desires to be present at the burning and funeral of Tetzel's theses, must come to the marketplace at two o'clock."

Crowds assembled at the appointed hour, and the Dominican's propositions were consigned to the flames in the midst of noisy acclamations. One copy escaped the conflagration, which Luther sent afterwards to his friend Lange of Erfurth. These generous but imprudent youths followed the precept of the ancients—Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth, and not that of Jesus Christ. But when doctors and professors set the example at Frankfort, can we be astonished that it was followed by young students at Wittenberg? The news of this academical execution soon spread through all Germany, and made a great noise. Luther was deeply pained at it.

"I am surprised," wrote he to his old master, Jodocus, at Erfurth, "you should have believed I allowed Tetzel's theses to be burnt! Do you think I have so taken leave of my senses? But what could I do? When I am concerned, everybody believes whatever is told of me. Can I stop the mouths of the whole world? Well! let them say, hear, and believe whatever they like concerning me. I shall work so long as God gives me strength, and with His help I shall fear nothing."—"What will come of it," said he to Lange, "I know not, except that the peril in which I am involved becomes greater on this very account." This act shows how the hearts of the young already glowed for the cause which Luther defended. This was a sign of great importance; for a movement which has taken place among the youth is soon of necessity propagated throughout the whole nation.

The theses of Tetzel and of Wimpina, although little esteemed, produced a certain effect. They aggravated the dispute; they widened the rent in the mantle of the Church; they brought questions of the highest interest into the controversy. The chiefs of the Church began, accordingly, to take a nearer view of the matter, and to declare strongly against the Reformer. "Truly, I do not know on whom Luther relies," said the Bishop of Brandenburg, "since he thus ventures to attack the power of the bishops." Perceiving that this new conjuncture called for new measures, the bishop came himself to Wittenberg. But he found Luther animated with that interior joy which springs from a good conscience, and determined to give battle. The bishop saw that the Augustine monk obeyed a power superior to his own, and returned in anger to Brandenburg.

One day during the winter of 1518, as he was seated before the fire, he said, turning to those who surrounded him: "I will not lay my head down in peace, until I have thrown Martin into the fire, like this brand;" and he flung the billet into the flames. The revolution of the sixteenth century was not destined to be accomplished by the heads of the Church, any more than that of the first century had been by the sanhedrin and by the synagogue. The chiefs of the clergy in the sixteenth century were opposed to Luther, to the Reformation, and to its ministers; as they had been to Jesus Christ, to the Gospel, to his Apostles, and, as too frequently happens in every age, to the truth.—"The bishops," said Luther, speaking of the visit the prelate of Brandenburg had paid him, "begin to perceive that they ought to have done what I am doing, and they are ashamed of it. They call me proud and arrogant—I will not deny that I am so; but they are not the people to know either what God is, or what we are."

CHAPTER 9

Prierio—System of Rome—Dialogue—System of Reform—Answer to Prierio—The Word—The Pope and the Church—Hochstraten—The Monks—Luther replies—Eck—The School—The Obelisks—Luther's Sentiments—The Asterisks—Rupture

A more formidable resistance than that made by Tetzel was already opposed to Luther. Rome had answered. A reply had gone forth from the walls of the sacred palace. It was not Leo X who had condescended to speak of theology: "'Tis a mere monkish squabble," he said one day; "the best way is not to meddle with it." And at another time he observed, "It is a drunken German that has written these theses; when the fumes have passed off, he will talk very differently." A Roman Dominican, Sylvester Mazzolini of Prierio or Prierias, master of the sacred palace, filled the office of censor, and it was in this capacity that he first became acquainted with the theses of the Saxon monk.

A Romish censor and Luther's theses, what a contrast! Freedom of speech, freedom of inquiry, freedom of belief, come into collision in the city of Rome with that power which claims to hold in its hands the monopoly of intelligence, and to open and shut at pleasure the mouth of Christendom. The struggle of christian liberty which engenders children of God, with pontifical despotism which produces slaves of Rome, is typified, as it were, in the first days of the Reformation, in the encounter of Luther and Prierio.

The Roman censor, priorgeneral of the Dominicans, empowered to decide on what Christendom should profess or conceal, and on what it ought to know or be ignorant of, hastened to reply. He published a writing, which he dedicated to Leo X. In it he spoke contemptuously of the German monk, and declared with Romish assurance, "that he should like to know whether this Martin had an iron nose or a brazen head, which cannot be broken!" And then under the form of a dialogue, he attacked Luther's theses, employing by turns ridicule, insult, and menaces.

This combat between the Augustine of Wittenberg and the Dominican of Rome was waged on the very question that is the principle of the Reformation, namely: "What is the sole infallible authority for Christians?" Here is the system of the Church, as set forth by its most independent organs:—

The letter of the written Word is dead without the spirit of interpretation, which alone reveals its hidden meaning. Now, this spirit is not given to every Christian, but to the Church—that is, to the priests. It is great presumption to say, that He who

promised the Church to be with her always, even to the end of the world, could have abandoned her to the power of error. It will be said, perhaps, that the doctrine and constitution of the Church are no longer such as we find them in the sacred oracles. Undoubtedly: but this change is only in appearance; it extends only to the form and not to the substance. We may go further: this change is progression. The vivifying power of the Divine Spirit has given a reality to what in Scripture was merely an idea; it had filled up the outline of the Word; it has put a finishing touch to its rude sketches; it has completed the work of which the Bible only gave the first rough draft. We must therefore understand the sense of the Holy Scriptures as settled by the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. From this point the catholic doctors diverge. General councils, said some (and Gerson was one of them), are the representatives of the Church. The pope, said others, is the depositary of the spirit of interpretation, and no one has a right to understand the Scriptures otherwise that as decreed by the Roman pontiff. This was the opinion of Prierio.

Such was the doctrine opposed by the master of the sacred palace to the infant Reformation. He put forward propositions, on the power of the Church and of the pope, at which the most shameless flatterers of the Church of Rome would have blushed. Here is one of the principles he advanced at the head of his writing: "Whoever relies not on the teaching of the Roman Church, and of the Roman pontiff, as the infallible rule of faith, from which the Holy Scriptures themselves derive their strength and their authority, is a heretic."

Then, in a dialogue in which Luther and Sylvester are the speakers, the latter seeks to refute the doctor's propositions. The opinions of the Saxon monk were altogether strange to a Roman censor; and, accordingly, Prierio shows that he understood neither the emotions of his heart, nor the springs of his conduct. He measured the doctor of the truth by the petty standard of the servants of Rome. "My dear Luther," said he, "if you were to receive from our lord the pope a good bishopric and a plenary indulgence for repairing your Church, you would sing in a softer strain, and you would extol the indulgences you are now disparaging!"

The Italian, so proud of his elegant manners, occasionally assumes the most scurrilous tone: "If it is the nature of dogs to bite," said he to Luther, "I fear you had a dog for your father." The Dominican at last wonders at his own condescension in speaking to the rebellious monk; and ends by showing his adversary the cruel teeth of an inquisitor. "The Roman Church," says he, "the apex of whose spiritual and temporal power is in the pope, may constrain by the secular arm those who, having once received the faith, afterwards go astray. It is not bound to employ reason to combat and vanquish rebels."

These words, traced by the pen of a dignitary of the Roman court, were very significant. Still, they did not frighten Luther. He believed, or feigned to believe, that this dialogue was not written by Prierio, but by Ulric Hutten, or by another of the contributors to the Letters of some Obscure Men; who, said, he, in his satirical humour, and in order to excite Luther against Prierio, had compiled this mass of absurdities. He had no desire to behold the see of Rome excited against him. However, after having kept silence for sometime, his doubts (if he had any) were dispelled: he set to work, and his answer was ready in two days.

The Bible had moulded the reformer and begun the Reformation. Luther needed not the testimony of the Church in order to believe. His faith had come from the Bible itself; from within and not from without. He was so intimately convinced that the evangelical doctrine was immovably founded on the Word of God, that in his eyes all external authority was useless. This experiment made by Luther opened a new futurity to the Church. The living source that had welled forth for the monk of Wittenberg was to become a river to slake the thirst of nations.

In order that we may comprehend the Word, the Spirit of God must give understanding, said the Church; and it was right so far. But its error had been in considering the Holy Spirit as a monopoly accorded to a certain class, and supposing that it could be confined exclusively within assemblies or colleges, in a city or in a conclave. The wind bloweth where it listeth, had said the Son of God, speaking of God's Spirit; in another place, they shall all be taught of God. The corruption of the Church, the ambition of the pontiffs, the passions of the councils, the quarrels of the clergy, the pomp of the prelates, had banished far from the sacerdotal abodes that Holy Ghost, that spirit of humility and peace. It had deserted the assemblies of the proud, the palaces of the mighty ones of the Church, and had taken up its dwelling with simple Christians and humble priests. It had fled from a domineering hierarchy, that had often trampled underfoot and shed the blood of the poor; from a proud and ignorant clergy, whose chiefs were better skilled in using the sword than the Bible; and dwelt at one time with despised sects, and at another with men of intelligence and learning.

The holy cloud, that had departed from the sumptuous basilics and proud cathedrals, had descended into the obscure abodes of the humble, or into the quiet studies, those tranquil witnesses of a conscientious inquiry. The Church, degraded by its love of power and of riches, dishonoured in the eyes of the people by the venal use it made of the doctrine of life; the Church which sold salvation to replenish the treasuries drained by its haughtiness and debauchery,—had forfeited all respect, and

sensible men no longer attached any value to her testimony. Despising so debased an authority, they joyfully turned towards the Divine Word, and to its infallible authority, as toward the only refuge remaining to them in such a general disorder.

The age, therefore, was prepared. The bold movement by which Luther changed the resting-place of the sublimest hopes of the human heart, and with a hand of power transported them from the walls of the Vatican to the rock of the Word of God, was saluted with enthusiasm. This is the work that the reformer had in view in his reply to Prierio.

He passes over the principles which the Dominican had set forth in the beginning of his work: "But," said he, "following your example, I will also lay down certain fundamental principles.

"The first is this expression of St. Paul: Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you. let him be accursed.

"The second is this passage from St. Augustine to St. Jerome: 'I have learnt to render to the canonical books alone the honour of believing most firmly that none of them has erred; as for the others, I do not believe in what they teach, simply because it is they who teach them.'

"Here we see Luther laying down with a firm hand the essential principles of the Reformation: the Word of God, the whole Word of God, nothing but the Word of God. "If you clearly understand these points," continues he, "you will also understand that your Dialogue is wholly overturned by them; for you have only brought forward the expressions and the opinions of St. Thomas." Then, attacking his adversary's axioms, he frankly declares that he believes popes and councils can err. He complains of the flatteries of the Roman courtiers, who ascribe both temporal and spiritual power to the pope. He declares that the Church exists virtually in Christ alone, and representatively in the councils. And then coming to Prierio's insinuation: "No doubt you judge of me after yourself," said he; "but if I aspired to an episcopal station, of a surety I should not use the language that is so grating to your ears. Do you imagine I am ignorant how bishoprics and the priesthood are obtained at Rome? Do not the very children sing in the streets these well-known words:—Of all foul spots the world around, The foulest spot in Rome is found."

Such songs as these had been current at Rome before the election of one of the latter popes. Nevertheless, Luther speaks of Leo with respect: "I know," said he, "that

we may compare him to Daniel in Babylon; his innocence has often endangered his life." He concludes by a few words in reply to Prierio's threats: "Finally, you say that the pope is at once pontiff and emperor, and that he is mighty to compel obedience by the secular arm. Do you thirst for blood? I protest that you will not frighten me either by your rhodomontades or by the threatening noise of your words. If I am put to death, Christ lives, Christ my Lord and the Lord of all, blessed for evermore. Amen."

Thus, with a firm hand, Luther erects against the infidel altar of the papacy the altar of the only infallible and Holy Word of God, before which he would have every knee to bow, and on which he declares himself ready to offer up his life.

Prierio published an answer, and then a third book "On the Irrefragable Truth of the Church and of the Roman Pontiff," in which, relying upon the ecclesiastical law, he asserted, that although the pope should make the whole world go with him to hell, he could neither be condemned nor deposed. The pope was at last obliged to impose silence on Prierio.

A new adversary erelong entered the lists; he also was a Dominican. James Hochstraten, inquisitor at Cologne, whom we have already seen opposing Reuchlin and the friends of letters, shuddered at Luther's boldness. It was necessary for monkish darkness and fanaticism to come in contact with him who was destined to give them a mortal blow. Monachism had sprung up as the primitive truth began to disappear. Since then, monks and errors had grown up side by side. The man had now appeared who was to accelerate their ruin; but these robust champions could not abandon the field of battle without a struggle. It lasted all the reformer's life; but in Hochstraten this combat is singularly personified: Hochstraten and Luther; the free and courageous Christian with the impetuous slave of monkish superstitions! Hochstraten lost his temper, grew furious, and called loudly for the heretic's death It is by the stake he wished to secure the triumph of Rome. "It is hightreason against the Church," exclaimed he, "to allow so horrible a heretic to live one hour longer. Let the scaffold be instantly erected for him!" This murderous advice was, alas! but too effectually carried out in many countries; the voices of numerous martyrs, as in the primitive times of the Church, gave testimony to the truth, even in the midst of flames. But in vain were the sword and the stake invoked against Luther. The Angel of the Lord kept watch continually around him, and preserved him.

Luther answered Hochstraten in few words, but with great energy: "Go," said he in conclusion, "go, thou raving murderer, who criest for the blood of thy brethren; it is my earnest desire that thou forbearest to call me Christian and faithful, and that thou continuest, on the contrary, to decry me as a heretic. Understandest thou these

things, bloodthirsty man! enemy of the truth! and if thy mad rage should hurry thee to undertake anything against me, take care to act with circumspection, and to choose thy time well. God knows what is my purpose, if he grant me life My hope and my expectation, God willing, will not deceive me." Hochstraten was silent.

A more painful attack awaited the reformer. Doctor Eck, the celebrated professor of Ingolstadt, the deliverer of Urban Regius, and Luther's friend, had received the famous theses. Eck was not a man to defend the abuse of indulgences; but he was a doctor of the schools and not of the Bible; well versed in the scholastic writings, but not in the Word of God. If Prierio had represented Rome, if Hochstraten had represented the monks, Eck represented the schoolmen. The schools, which for five centuries past had domineered over Christendom, far from giving way at the first blow of the reformer, rose up haughtily to crush the man who dared pour out upon them the floods of his contempt. Eck and Luther, the School and the Word, had more than one struggle; but it was now that the combat began.

Eck could not but find errors in many of Luther's positions. Nothing leads us to doubt the sincerity of his convictions. He as enthusiastically maintained the scholastic opinions, as Luther did the declarations of the Word of God. We may even suppose that he felt no little pain when he found himself obliged to oppose his old friend; it would seem, however, from the manner of his attack, that passion and jealousy had some share in his motives.

He gave the name of Obelisks to his remarks against Luther's theses. Desirous at first of saving appearances, he did not publish his work, but was satisfied with communicating it confidentially to his ordinary, the Bishop of Eichstadt. But the Obelisks were soon extensively circulated, either through the indiscretion of the bishop or by the doctor himself. A copy fell into the hands of Link, a friend of Luther and preacher at Nuremberg. The latter hastened to send it to the reformer. Eck was a far more formidable adversary than Tetzel, Prierio, or Hochstraten: the more his work surpassed theirs in learning and in subtlety, the more dangerous it was. He assumed a tone of compassion towards his "feeble adversary," being well aware that pity inflicts more harm than anger. He insinuated that Luther's propositions circulated the Bohemian poison, that they savoured of Bohemia, and by these malicious allusions, he drew upon Luther the unpopularity and hatred attached in Germany to the name of Huss and to the schismatics of his country.

The malice that pervaded this treatise exasperated Luther; but the thought that this blow came from an old friend grieved him still more. Is it then at the cost of his

friend's affections that he must uphold the truth? Luther poured out the deep sorrow of his heart in a letter to Egranus, pastor at Zwickau. "In the Obelisks I am styled a venomous man, a Bohemian, a heretic, a seditious, insolent, rash person I pass by the milder insults such as drowsy-headed, stupid, ignorant, condemner of the sovereign pontiff, etc. This book is brim-full of the blackest outrages. Yet he who penned them is a distinguished man, with a spirit full of learning, and a learning full of spirit; and, what causes me the deepest vexation, he is a man who was united to me by a great and recently contracted friendship: it is John Eck, doctor of divinity, chancellor of Ingolstadt, a man celebrated and illustrious by his writing. If I did not know Satan's thoughts, I should be astonished at the fury which has led this man to break off so sweet and so new a friendship, and that, too, without warning me, without writing to me, without saying a single word."

But if Luther's heart was wounded, his courage was not cast down. On the contrary, he rose up invigorated for the contest. "Rejoice, my brother," said he to Egranus, whom a violent enemy had likewise attacked, "rejoice, and do not let these flying leaves affright thee. The more my adversaries give way to their fury, the farther I advance. I leave the things that are behind me, in order that they may bay at them, and I pursue what lies before me, that they may bay at them in their turn."

Eck was sensible how disgraceful his conduct had been, and endeavoured to vindicate himself in a letter to Carlstadt. In it he styled Luther "their common friend," and cast all the blame on the Bishop of Eichstadt, at whose solicitation he pretended to have written his work. He said that it had not been his intention to publish the Obelisks; that he would have felt more regard for the bonds of friendship that united him to Luther; and demanded in conclusion, that Luther, instead of disputing publicly with him, should turn his weapons against the Frankfort divines. The professor of Ingolstadt, who had not feared to strike the first blow, began to be alarmed when he reflected on the strength of that adversary whom he had so imprudently attacked. Willingly would he have eluded the struggle; but it was too late.

All these fine phrases did not persuade Luther, who was yet inclined to remain silent. "I will swallow patiently," said he, "this sop, worthy of Cerberus." But his friends differed from him: they solicited, they even constrained him to answer. He therefore replied to the Obelisks by his Asterisks, opposing (as he said, playing on the words) to the rust and livid hue of the Ingoldstadt doctor's Obelisks, the light and dazzling brightness of the stars of heaven. In this work he treated his adversary with less severity than he had shown his previous antagonists; but his indignation pierced through his words.

He showed that in these chaotic Obelisks there was nothing from the Holy Scriptures, nothing from the Fathers of the Church, nothing from the ecclesiastical canons; that they were filled with scholastic glosses, opinions, mere opinions and empty dreams; in a word, the very things that Luther had attacked. The Asterisks are full of life and animation. The author is indignant at the errors of his friend's book; but he pities the man. He professes anew the fundamental principle which he laid down in his answer to Prierio: "The supreme pontiff is a man, and may be led into error; but God is truth, and cannot err." Farther on, employing the argumentum ad hominem against the scholastic doctor, he says to him, "It would be great impudence assuredly for anyone to teach in the philosophy of Aristotle, what he cannot prove by the authority of that ancient author.—You grant it.—It is, a fortiori, the most impudent of all impudence to affirm in the Church and among Christians what Christ himself has not taught. Now, where is it found in the Bible that the treasure of Christ's merits is in the hands of the pope?"

He adds farther: "As for the malicious reproach of Bohemian heresy, I bear this calumny with patience through love of Christ. I live in a celebrated university, in a well-famed city, in a respectable bishopric, in a powerful duchy, where all are orthodox, and where, undoubtedly, so wicked a heretic would not be tolerated."

Luther did not publish the Asterisks; he communicated them solely to his friends. They were not given to the public till long after.

This rupture between the two doctors of Ingoldstadt and Wittenberg made a great sensation in Germany. They had many friends in common. Scheurl especially, who appears to have been the man by whom the two doctors had been connected, was alarmed. He was one of those who desired to see a thorough reform in the German Church by means of its most distinguished organs. But if, at the very outset, the most eminent theologians of the day should fall to blows; if, while Luther came forward with novelties, Eck became the representative of antiquity, what disruption might not be feared! Would not numerous partisans rally round each of these two chiefs, and would not two hostile camps be formed in the bosom of the empire?

Scheurl endeavoured therefore to reconcile Eck and Luther. The latter declared his willingness to forget everything; that he loved the genius, that he admired the learning of Doctor Eck, and that what his old friend had done had caused him more pain than anger. "I am ready," said he to Scheurl, "for peace and for war: but I prefer peace. Apply yourself to the task; grieve with us that the devil has thrown among us this beginning of discord, and afterwards rejoice that Christ in his mercy has crushed it." About the same time he wrote Eck a letter full of affection: but Eck made no reply;

he did not even send him any message. It was no longer a season for reconciliation. The contest daily grew warmer. Eck's pride and implacable spirit soon broke entirely that last ties of that friendship which every day grew weaker.

CHAPTER 10

Popular Writings—The Lord's Prayer—Our Father—Who art in Heaven—Hallowed be thy Name—Thy Kingdom come—Thy Will be done—Our Daily Bread—Sermon on Repentance—Remission of Sins cometh from Christ

Such were the struggles that the champion of the Word of God had to sustain at the very entrance of his career. But these contests with the leaders of society, these academical disputes, are of little account to the Christian. Human teachers imagine they have gained the noblest triumph, when they succeed in filling a few journals or a few drawing-rooms with the noise of their systems. Since it is with them a mere question of self-love or of party rather than of the welfare of humanity, they are satisfied with this worldly success. Their labours are accordingly like smoke, which, after blinding the eyes, passes away, leaving no trace behind. They have neglected depositing the fire among the masses; they have but skimmed the surface of human society.

It is not so with the Christian; he thinks not of a party, or of academical success, but of the salvation of souls. He therefore willingly neglects the brilliant contest in which he might engage at his ease with the champions of the world, and prefers the obscure labours which carry light and life to the cottages and homes of the people. This was what Luther did, or rather, following the precept of his Divine master, he did this, and left not other things undone. At the time he was combating with inquisitors, university chancellors, and masters of the sacred palace, he endeavoured to diffuse sound knowledge on religious subjects among the multitude. This is the aim of many of the popular works he published about this time, such as his Sermons on the Ten Commandments, delivered two years before in the church of Wittenberg, and of which we have already spoken, and his Explanation of the Lord's Prayer for simple and ignorant Laymen. Who would not be pleased to know how the reformer addressed the people at this period? We will therefore quote some of the expressions that he put forth "to run through the land," as he says in the preface to the latter work.

Prayer, that interior act of the heart, will undoubtedly ever be one of the points by which a true and vital reformation will begin; Luther accordingly occupied himself on this subject without delay. It is impossible to translate his energetic style, and the strength of that language which grew, so to speak, under his pen, as he wrote; we will however make the attempt.

"When thou prayest," said he, "let thy words be few, but thy thoughts and affections many, and above all let them be profound. The less thou speakest the better

thou prayest. Few words and many thoughts, is christian: many words and few thoughts, is heathenish "External and bodily prayer is that buzzing of the lips, that outward babble which is gone through without any attention, and which strikes the eyes and the ears of men; but prayer in spirit and in truth is the inward desire, the motions, the sighs, which issue from the depths of the heart. The former is the prayer of hypocrites, and of all those who trust in themselves: the latter is the prayer of the children of God, who walk in his fear."

Then passing on to the first words of the Lord's Prayer, Our Father, he expresses himself thus:—

"There is no name among all names which more inclines us towards God, than the name of Father. We should not feel so much happiness and consolation in calling him our Lord, or God, or Judge By this word Father the bowels of the Lord are moved; for there is no voice more lovely or more endearing to a father than that of his child.

"Who art in Heaven, acknowledges himself a stranger upon earth. Hence there arises an ardent longing in his heart, like that of a child who dwells far from his father's country, among strangers, in wretchedness and in mourning. It is as if he said: Alas! my Father! thou art in heaven, and I, thy unhappy child, am on the earth, far from thee, in the midst of danger, necessity, and tribulation.

"Hallowed be thy name.—He who is passionate, envious, an evil-speaker, a calumniator, dishonours that name of God in which he was baptised. Putting to an impious use the vessel that God hath consecrated to himself, he is like a priest who would take the holy cup and with it give drink to a sow, or gather dung

"Thy kingdom come.—Those who amass wealth, who build sumptuous houses, who seek all that the world can give, and pronounce this prayer with their lips, resemble large organpipes which peal loudly and incessantly in the churches, without either speech, feeling, or reason"

Further on Luther attacks the then very popular error of prilgrimages: "One goes to Rome, another to St. James; this man builds a chapel, that one endows a religious foundation, in order to attain the kingdom of God; but all neglect the essential point, which is to become His kingdom themselves. Why goest thou beyond the seas in search of God's kingdom? It is in thine own heart that it should be found.

"It is a terrible thing," continues he, "to hear this prayer offered up: Thy will be done! Where in the Church do we see this will of God performed? One bishop rises up

against another bishop, one church against another church. Priests, monks, and nuns, quarrel, fight, and battle. In every place there is nought but discord. And yet each party exclaim that their meaning is good, their intention upright; and thus to the honour and glory of God they all together perform a work of the devil

"Wherefore do we say Our bread?" continues he in explanation of the words, Give us this day our daily bread. "Because we pray not to have the ordinary bread that pagans eat, and which God gives to all men, but for our bread, ours, who are children of the heavenly Father.

"And what, then, is this bread of God?—It is Jesus Christ our Lord: I am the living bread which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. For this reason (and let us not deceive ourselves), all sermons and all instructions that do not set Jesus Christ before us and teach us to know him, cannot be the daily bread and the nourishment of our souls

"To what use will such bread have been prepared for us, if it is not offered to us, and so we cannot taste it? It is as if a magnificent banquet had been prepared, and there was no one to serve the bread, to hand around the dishes, to pour out the wine, so that the guests must feed themselves on the sight and the smell of the viands. For this cause we must preach Jesus Christ alone.

"But what is it, then, to know Jesus Christ, sayest thou, and what advantage is derived from it? I reply: To learn and to know Jesus Christ is to understand what the apostle says: Christ is made unto us of God, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Now this you understand, if you acknowledge all your wisdom to be a condemnable folly, your own righteousness a condemnable iniquity, your own holiness a condemnable impurity, your own redemption a miserable condemnation; if you feel that you are really before God and before all creatures a fool, a sinner, an impure, a condemned man, and if you show, not only by your words, but from the bottom of your heart, and by your works, that you have no consolation and no salvation remaining except in Jesus Christ. To believe is none other than to eat this bread from heaven."

Thus did Luther remain faithful to his resolution of opening the eyes of a blind people whom the priests were leading at their pleasure. His writings, circulating rapidly through all Germany, called up a new light, and scattered abundantly the seeds of truth in a soil well prepared for it. But while thinking of those who were afar off, he did not forget those who were near at hand.

From every pulpit the Dominicans condemned the infamous heretic. Luther, the man of the people, and who, had he been willing, might with a few words have aroused the popular waves, always disdained such triumphs, and thought only of instructing his hearers.

His reputation, which extended more and more, and the courage with which he raised the banner of Christ in the midst of the enslaved Church, caused his sermons to be listened to with ever increasing interest. Never had the crowd of hearers been so great. Luther went straight to the mark. One day, having gone into the pulpit at Wittenberg, he undertook to establish the doctrine of repentance, and on this occasion he delivered a sermon which afterwards became very celebrated, and in which he laid many of the foundations of the evangelical doctrine.

He first contrasts the pardon of men with the pardon of heaven. "There are two kinds of remission," said he, "remission of the penalty, and remission of the sin. The first reconciles man externally with the Christian Church. The second, which is the heavenly indulgence, reconciles man to God. If a man does not experience within himself that peace of conscience, that joy of heart which proceeds from the remission of God, there are no indulgences that can aid him, even should he purchase all that have ever been offered upon earth."

He continues thus: "They desire to do good works before their sins are forgiven, while it is necessary for sin to be forgiven before men can perform good works. It is not the works that expel sin; but the sin once expelled, good works will follow! For good works must be performed with a joyful heart, with a good conscience towards God, that is, with remission of sins."

He then comes to the principal object of his sermon, and it was also the great aim of the entire Reformation. The Church had been set in the place of God and of his Word; he challenges this claim, and makes everything depend on faith in the Word of God.

"The remission of the sin is in the power neither of the pope, nor of the bishop, nor of the priest, nor of any other man, but reposes solely on the Word of Christ, and on your own faith. For Christ designed not to build our consolation, our salvation, on the word or on the work of man, but solely on himself, on His work and on His Word Thy repentance and thy works may deceive thee, but Christ, thy God, will not deceive thee, he will not falter, and the devil shall not overthrow his words.

"A pope or a bishop has no more power than the lowliest priest, as regards remission of sins. And even were there no priest, each Christian, even a woman or a child, can do the same thing. For if a simple Christian says to you, 'God pardons sin in the name of Jesus Christ,' and you receive this word with a firm faith, and as if God himself were addressing you, you are absolved

"If you do not believe your sins are forgiven, you make God a liar, and you put more confidence in your own vain thoughts, than in God and his Word

"Under the Old Testament, neither prophet, priest, nor king had the power of proclaiming remission of sins. But under the New, each believer has this power. The Church is overflowing with remission of sins! If a pious Christian consoles thy conscience with the word of the cross, let it be man or woman, young or old, receive this consolation with such faith as rather to die many deaths than to doubt that it will be so before God Repent, do all the works in thy power; but let the faith thou hast in pardon through Jesus Christ be in the foremost rank, and command alone on the field of battle."

Thus spoke Luther to his astonished and enraptured hearers. All the scaffolding that impudent priests had raised to their profit between God and the soul of man, was thrown down, and man was brought face to face with his God. The word of forgiveness descended pure from on high, without passing through a thousand corrupting channels. In order that the testimony of God should be efficacious, it was no longer necessary for men to set their delusive seal to it. The monopoly of the sacerdotal caste was abolished; the Church was emancipated.

CHAPTER 11

Apprehensions of his Friends—Journey to Heidelberg—Bibra—Palatine Palace Rupture—The Paradoxes—Disputation—The Audience—Bucer—Brentz—Snepf Conversations with Luther—Labours of these young Doctors—Effects on Luther—The aged Professor—The true Light—Arrival

Meanwhile it had become necessary for the fire that had been lighted at Wittenberg to be kindled in other places. Luther, not content with announcing the Gospel truth in the place of his residence, both to the students of the academy and to the people, was desirous of scattering elsewhere the seed of sound doctrine. In the spring of 1518, a general chapter of the Augustine order was to be held at Heidelberg. Luther was summoned to it as one of the most distinguished men of the order. His friends did all they could to dissuade him from undertaking this journey. In truth, the monks had endeavoured to render Luther's name odious in all the places through which he would have to pass. To insults they added menaces. It would require but little to excite a popular tumult on his journey of which he might be the victim. "Or else," said his friends, "they will effect by fraud and stratagem, what they dare not do by violence." But Luther never suffered himself to be hindered in the accomplishment of a duty by the fear of danger, however imminent. He therefore closed his ears to the timid observations of his friends: he pointed to Him in whom he trusted, and under whose guardianship he was ready to undertake so formidable a journey. Immediately after the festival of Easter, he set out calmly on foot, the 13th April 1518.

He took with him a guide named Urban, who carried his little baggage, and who was to accompany him as far as Wurtzburg. What thoughts must have crowded into the heart of this servant of the Lord during his journey! At Weissenfels, the pastor, whom he did not know, immediately recognised him as the Wittenberg doctor, and gave him a hearty welcome. At Erfurth, two other brothers of the Augustine order joined him. At Judenbach, they fell in with the elector's privy councillor, Degenhard Pfeffinger, who entertained them at the inn where they had found him. "I had the pleasure," wrote Luther to Spalatin, "of making this rich lord a few groats poorer; you know how I like on every opportunity to levy contributions on the rich for the benefit of the poor, especially if the rich are my friends." He reached Coburg, overwhelmed with fatigue. "All goes well by God's grace," wrote he, "except that I acknowledge having sinned in undertaking this journey on foot. But for that sin I have no need, I think, of the remission of indulgences; for my contrition is perfect, and the satisfaction plenary. I am overcome with fatigue, and all the conveyances are full. Is not this enough, and more than enough, of penance, contrition, and satisfaction?"

The reformer of Germany, unable to find room in the public conveyances, and no one being willing to give up his place, was compelled, notwithstanding his weariness, to leave Coburg the next morning humbly on foot. He reached Wurtzburg the second Sunday after Easter, towards evening. Here he sent back his guide.

In this city resided the Bishop of Bibra, who had received his theses with so much approbation. Luther was the bearer of a letter to him from the Elector of Saxony. The bishop, delighted at the opportunity of becoming personally acquainted with this bold champion of the truth, immediately invited him to the episcopal palace. He went and met him at the door, conversed affectionately with him, and offered to provide him with a guide to Heidelberg. But at Wurtzburg Luther had met his two friends, the vicar-general Staupitz, and Lange, the prior of Erfurth, who had offered him a place in their carriage. He therefore thanked Bibra for his kindness; and on the morrow the three friends quitted Wurtzburg. They thus travelled together for three days, conversing with one another. On the 21st April they arrived at Heidelberg. Luther went and lodged at the Augustine convent.

The Elector of Saxony had given him a letter for the Count Palatine Wolfgang, duke of Bavaria. Luther repaired to his magnificent castle, the situation of which excites, even to this day, the admiration of strangers. The monk from the plains of Saxony had a heart to admire the situation of Heidelberg, where the two beautiful valleys of the Rhine and the Neckar unite. He delivered his letter to James Simler, steward of the household. The latter on reading it observed: "In truth, you have here a valuable letter of credit." The countpalatine received Luther with much kindness, and frequently invited him to his table, together with Lange and Staupitz. So friendly a reception was a source of great comfort to Luther. "We were very happy, and amused one another with agreeable and pleasant conversation," said he; "eating and drinking, examining all the beauties of the palatine palace, admiring the ornaments, arms, cuirasses; in fine, everything remarkable contained in this celebrated and truly regal castle."

But Luther had another task to perform. He must work while it is yet day. Having arrived at a university which exercised great influence over the west and south of Germany, he was there to strike a blow that should shake the churches of these countries. He began, therefore, to write some theses which he purposed maintaining in a public disputation. Such discussions were not unusual; but Luther felt that this one, to be useful, should lay forcible hold upon men's minds. His disposition, besides, naturally led him to present truth under a paradoxical form. The professors of the university would not permit the discussion to take place in their

large theatre; and Luther was obliged to take a hall in the Augustine convent. The 26th April was the day appointed for the disputation.

Heidelberg, at a later period, received the evangelical doctrine: those who were present at the conference in the convent might have foreseen that it would one day bear fruit. Luther's reputation had attracted a large audience; professors, students, courtiers, citizens, came in crowds. The following are some of the doctor's Paradoxes; for so he designated his theses. Perhaps even in our days they would still bear this name; it would, however, be easy to translate them into obvious propositions:—

1."The law of God is a salutary doctrine of life. Nevertheless, it cannot aid man in attaining to righteousness; on the contrary, it impedes him.

3."Man's works, however fair and good they may be, are, however, to all appearance, nothing but deadly sins.

4."God's works, however unsightly and bad they may appear, have however an everlasting merit.

7."The works of the righteous themselves would be mortal sins, unless, being filled with a holy reverence for the Lord, they feared that their works might in truth be mortal sins.

9."To say that works done out of Christ are truly dead, but not deadly, is a dangerous forgetfulness of the fear of God.

13. "Since the fall of man, freewill is but an idle word; and if man does all he can, he still sins mortally.

16. "A man who imagines to arrive at grace by doing all that he is able to do, adds sin to sin, and is doubly guilty.

18. "It is certain that man must altogether despair of himself, in order to be made capable of receiving Christ's grace.

21. "A theologian of the world calls evil good, and good evil; but a theologian of the cross teaches aright on the matter.

22. "The wisdom which endeavours to learn the invisible perfections of God in his works, puffs up, hardens, and blinds a man.

23. "The law calls forth God's anger, kills, curses, accuses, judges, and condemns whatsoever is not in Christ.

24. "Yet this wisdom is not evil; and the law is not to be rejected; but the man who studies not the knowledge of God under the cross, turns to evil whatever is good.

25. "That man is not justified who performs many works; but he who, without works, has much faith in Christ.

26. "The law says, Do this! and what it commands is never done. Grace says, Believe in Him! and immediately all things are done.

28. "The love of God finds nothing in man, but creates in him what he loves. The love of man proceeds from his well-beloved."

Five doctors of divinity attacked these theses. They had read them with all astonishment that novelty excites. Such theology appeared very extravagant; and yet they discussed these points, according to Luther's own testimony, with a courtesy that inspired him with much esteem for them but at the same time with earnestness and discernment. Luther, on his side, displayed wonderful mildness in his replies, unrivalled patience in listening to the objections of his adversaries, and all the quickness of St. Paul in solving the difficulties opposed to him. His replies were short, but full of the Word of God, and excited the admiration of his hearers. "He is in all respects like Erasmus," said many; "but surpasses him in one thing: he openly professes what Erasmus is content merely to insinuate."

The disputation was drawing to an end. Luther's adversaries had retired with honour from the field; the youngest of them, Doctor George Niger, alone continued the struggle with the powerful champion. Alarmed at the daring propositions of the monk, and not knowing what further arguments to have recourse to, he exclaimed, with an accent of fear: "If our peasants heard such things, they would stone you to death!" At these words the whole auditory burst into a loud laugh.

Never had an assembly listened with so much attention to a theological discussion. The first words of the reformer had aroused their minds. Questions which shortly before would have been treated with indifference, were now full of interest. On the countenances of many of the hearers and lookers-on might have seen reflected the new ideas which the bold assertions of the Saxon doctor had awakened in their minds.

Three young men in particular were deeply moved. One of them, Martin Bucer by name, was a Dominican, twenty-seven years of age, who, notwithstanding the prejudices of his order, appeared unwilling to lose one of the doctor's words. He was born in a small town of Alsace, and had entered a convent at sixteen. He soon displayed such capacity that the most enlightened monks entertained the highest expectations of him: "He will one day be the ornament of our order," said they. His superiors had sent him to Heidelberg to study philosophy, theology, Greek, and Hebrew. At that period Erasmus published several of his works, which Bucer read with avidity.

Soon appeared the earliest writings of Luther. The Alsacian student hastened to compare the reformer's doctrines with the Holy Scriptures. Some misgivings as to the truth of the Popish religion arose in his mind. It was thus that the light was diffused in those days. The elector palatine took particular notice of the young man. His strong and sonorous voice, his graceful manners and eloquent language, the freedom with which he attacked the vices of the day, made him a distinguished preacher. He was appointed chaplain to the court, and was fulfilling his functions when Luther's journey to Heidelberg was announced. What joy for Bucer! No one repaired with greater eagerness to the hall of the Augustine convent. He took with him paper, pens, and ink, intending to take down what the doctor said. But while his hand was swiftly tracing Luther's words, the finger of God, in more indelible characters, wrote on his heart the great truths he heard. The first gleams of the doctrine of grace were diffused through his soul during this memorable hour. The Dominican was gained over to Christ.

Not far from Bucer stood John Brentz or Brentius, then nineteen years of age. He was the son of a magistrate in a city of Swabia, and at thirteen had been entered as student at Heidelberg. None manifested greater application. He rose at midnight and began to study. This habit became so confirmed, that during his whole life he could not sleep after that hour. In later years he consecrated these tranquil moments to meditation on the Scriptures. Brentz was one of the first to perceive the new light then dawning on Germany. He welcomed it with a heart abounding in love. He eagerly perused Luther's works. But what was his delight when he could hear the writer himself at Heidelberg! One of the doctor's propositions more especially startled the youthful scholar; it was this: "That man is not justified before God who performs many works; but he who, without works, has much faith in Jesus Christ."

A pious woman of Heilbronn on the Neckar, wife of a senator of that town, named Snepf, had imitated Hannah's example, and consecrated her firstborn son to the Lord, with a fervent desire to see him devote himself to the study of theology. This young

man, who was born in 1495, made rapid progress in learning; but either from taste, or from ambition, or in compliance with his father's wishes, he applied to the study of jurisprudence. The pious mother was grieved to behold her child, her Ehrhard, pursuing another career than that to which she had consecrated him. She admonished him, entreated him, prayed him continually to remember the vow she had made on the day of his birth. Overcome at last by his mother's perseverance, Ehrhard Snepf gave way. Erelong he felt such a taste for his new studies, that nothing in the world could have diverted him from them.

He was very intimate with Bucer and Brentz, and they were friends until death; "for," says one of their biographers, "friendships based on the love of letters and of virtue never fail." He was present with his two friends at the Heidelberg discussion. The Paradoxes and courage of the Wittenberg doctor gave him a new impulse. Rejecting the vain opinion of human merits, he embraced the doctrine of the free justification of the sinner.

The next day Bucer went to Luther. "I had a familiar and private conversation with him," said Bucer; "a most exquisite repast, not of dainties, but of truths that were set before me. To whatever objection I made, the doctor had a reply, and explained everything with the greatest clearness. Oh! would to God that I had time to write more!" Luther himself was touched with Bucer's sentiments. "He is the only brother of his order," wrote he to Spalatin, "who is sincere; he is a young man of great promise. He received me with simplicity, and conversed with me very earnestly. He is worthy of our confidence and love."

Brentz, Snepf, and many others, excited by the new truths that began to dawn upon their minds, also visited Luther; they talked and conferred with him; they begged for explanations on what they did not understand. The reformer replied, strengthening his arguments by the Word of God. Each sentence imparted fresh light to their minds. A new world was opening before them.

After Luther's departure, these noble-minded men began to teach at Heidelberg. They felt it their duty to continue what the man of God had begun, and not allow the flame to expire which he had lighted up. The scholars will speak, when the teachers are silent. Brentz, although still so young, explained the Gospel of St. Matthew, at first in his own room, and afterwards, when the chamber became too small, in the theatre of philosophy. The theologians, envious at the crowd of hearers this young man drew around him, became irritated. Brentz then took orders, and transferred his lectures to the college of the Canons of the Holy Ghost. Thus, the fire already kindled

up in Saxony now glowed in Heidelberg. The centres of light increased in number. This period has been denominated the seedtime of the Palatinate.

But it was not the Palatinate alone that reaped the fruits of the Heidelberg disputation. These courageous friends of the truth soon became shining lights in the Church. They all attained to exalted stations, and took part in many of the debates which the Reformation occasioned. Strasburg, and England a little later, were indebted to Bucer for a purer knowledge of the truth. Snepf first declared it at Marburg, then at Stuttgard, Tubingen, and Jena. Brentz, after having taught at Heidelberg, continued his labours for a long period at Tubingen, and at Halle in Swabia. We shall meet with these three men again in the course of our history.

This disputation carried forward Luther himself. He increased daily in the knowledge of the truth. "I belong to those," said he, "who improve by writing and by teaching others, and not to those who from nothing become on a sudden great and learned doctors." He was overjoyed at seeing with what avidity the students of the schools received the dawning truth, and this consoled him when he found the old doctors so deep-rooted in their opinions. "I have the glorious hope," said he, "that as Christ, when rejected by the Jews, turned to the Gentiles, we shall now also behold the new theology, that has been rejected by these greybeards with their empty and fantastical notions, welcomed by the rising generation."

The chapter being ended, Luther thought of returning to Wittenberg. The count palatine gave him a letter for the elector, dated 1st of May, in which he said "that Luther had shown so much skill in the disputation, as greatly to contribute to the renown of the university of Wittenberg." He was not allowed to return on foot. The Nuremberg Augustines conducted him as far as Wurtzburg, from whence he proceeded to Erfurth with the friars from that city. As soon as he arrived he repaired to the house of his old teacher, Jodocus. The aged professor, much grieved and scandalised at the path his disciple had taken, was in the habit of placing before all Luther's propositions a theta, the letter employed by the Greeks to denote condemnation. He had written to the young doctor in terms of reproach, and the latter desired to reply in person to these letters. Not having been admitted, he wrote to Jodocus: "All the university, with the exception of one licentiate, think as I do. More than this; the prince, the bishop, many other prelates, and all our most enlightened citizens, declare with one voice, that up to the present time they had neither known nor understood Jesus Christ and his Gospel. I am ready to receive your corrections; and although they should be severe, they will appear to me very gentle. Open your heart, therefore, without fear; unburden your anger. I will not and I cannot be vexed with you. God and my conscience are my witnesses!"

The old doctor was moved by these expressions of his former pupil. He was willing to try if there were no means of removing the damnatory theta. They conversed on the matter, but the result was unfavourable. "I made him understand at least," said Luther, "that all their sentences were like that beast which is said to devour itself. But talking to a deaf man is labour in vain. These doctors obstinately cling to their petty distinctions, although they confess there is nothing to confirm them but the light of natural reason, as they call it—a dark chaos truly to us who preach no other light than Jesus Christ, the true and only light."

Luther quitted Erfurth in the carriage belonging to the convent, which took him to Eisleben. From thence, the Augustines of the place, proud of a doctor who had shed such glory on their order and on their city, his native place, conveyed him to Wittenberg with their own horses and at their own expense. Everyone desired to bestow some mark of affection and esteem on this extraordinary man, whose fame was constantly increasing.

He arrived on the Saturday after Ascension day. The journey had done him good, and his friends thought him improved in appearance and stronger than before his departure. They were delighted at all he had to tell them. Luther rested sometime after the fatigues of his journey and his dispute at Heidelberg; but this rest was only a preparation for severer toils.

Book 4—Luther before the Legate. May - December 1518

CHAPTER 1

The Resolutions—Repentance—Papacy—Leo X—Luther to his Bishop—Luther to the Pope—Luther to the Vicar-general—Rovera to the Elector—Sermon of Excommunication—Influence and Strength of Luther

Truth at last had raised her head in the midst of Christendom. Victorious over the inferior ministers of the papacy, she was now to enter upon a struggle with its chief in person. We are about to contemplate Luther contending with Rome.

It was after his return from Heidelberg that he took this bold step. His early theses on the indulgences had been misunderstood. He determined to explain their meaning with greater clearness. From the clamours that a blind hatred extorted from his enemies, he had learnt how important it was to win over the most enlightened part of the nation to the truth: he therefore resolved to appeal to its judgment, by setting forth the bases on which his new convictions were founded. It was requisite at once to challenge the decision of Rome: he did not hesitate to send his explanations thither. While he presented them with one hand to the enlightened and impartial readers of his nation, with the other he laid them before the throne of the sovereign pontiff.

These explanations of his theses, which he styled Resolutions, were written in a very moderate tone. Luther endeavoured to soften down the passages that had occasioned the greatest irritation, and thus gave proof of genuine humility. But at the same time he showed himself to be unshaken in his convictions, and courageously defended all the propositions which truth obliged him to maintain. He repeated once more, that every truly penitent Christian possesses remission of sins without papal indulgences; that the pope, like the lowliest priest, can do no more than simply declare what God has already pardoned; that the treasury of the merits of the saints, administered by the pope, was a pure chimera, and that the Holy Scriptures were the sole rule of faith. But let us hear his own statement on some of these points.

He begins by establishing the nature of real repentance, and contrasts that act of God which regenerates man with the mummeries of the church of Rome. “The Greek word Metanoia,” said he, “signifies, put on a new spirit, a new mind, take a new nature, so that ceasing to be earthly, you may become heavenly Christ is a teacher of the spirit and not of the letter, and his words are spirit and life. He teaches

therefore a repentance in spirit and in truth, and not those outward penances that can be performed by the proudest sinners without humiliation; he wills a repentance that can be effected in every situation of life,—under the kingly purple, under the priest's cassock, under the prince's hat,—in the midst of those pomps of Babylon where a Daniel lived, as well as under the monk's frock and the beggar's rags."

Further on we meet with this bold language:

"I care not for what pleases or displeases the pope. He is a man like other men. There have been many popes who loved not only errors and vices, but still more extraordinary things. I listen to the pope as pope, that is to say, when he speaks in the canons, according to the canons, or when he decrees some article in conjunction with a council, but not when he speaks after his own ideas. Were I to do otherwise, ought I not to say with those who know not Christ, that the horrible massacres of Christians by which Julius II was stained, were the good deeds of a gentle shepherd towards Christ's flock?

"I cannot help wondering," continues Luther, "at the simplicity of those who have asserted that the two swords of the Gospel represent, one the spiritual, the other the secular power. Yes! the pope wields a sword of iron; it is thus he exhibits himself to Christendom, not as a tender father, but as a formidable tyrant. Alas! an angry God has given us the sword we longed for, and taken away that which we despised. In no part of the world have there been more terrible wars than among Christians Why did not that acute mind which discovered this fine commentary, interpret in the same subtle manner the history of the two keys intrusted to St. Peter, and lay it down as a doctrine of the Church, that one key serves to open the treasures of heaven, the other the treasures of earth?"

"It is impossible," says Luther in another place, "for a man to be a Christian without having Christ; and if he has Christ, he possesses at the same time all that belongs to Christ. What gives peace to our consciences is this—by faith our sins are no longer ours, but Christ's, on whom God has laid them all; and, on the other hand, all Christ's righteousness belongs to us, to whom God has given it. Christ lays his hand on us, and we are healed. He casts his mantle over us, and we are sheltered; for he is the glorious Saviour, blessed for evermore."

With such views of the riches of salvation by Jesus Christ, there was no longer any need of indulgences.

While Luther attacks the papacy, he speaks honourably of Leo X. "The times in which we live are so evil," said he, "that even the most exalted individuals have no power to help the Church. We have at present a very good pope in Leo X. His sincerity, his learning, inspire us with joy. But what can be done by this one man, amiable and gracious as he is? He was worthy of being pope in better days. In our age we deserve none but such men as Julius II and Alexander VI."

He then comes to the point: "I will say what I mean, boldly and briefly: the Church needs a reformation. And this cannot be the work either of a single man, as the pope, or of many men, as the cardinals and councils; but it must be that of the whole world, or rather it is a work that belongs to God alone. As for the time in which such a reformation should begin, he alone knows who has created all time The dike is broken, and it is no longer in our power to restrain the impetuous and overwhelming billows."

This is a sample of the declarations and ideas which Luther addressed to his enlightened fellow-countrymen. The festival of Whitsuntide was approaching; and at the same period in which the apostles gave to the risen Saviour the first testimony of their faith, Luther, the new apostle, published his spirit-stirring book, in which he ardently called for a resurrection of the Church. On Saturday, 22nd May 1518, the eve of Pentecost, he sent the work to his ordinary the bishop of Brandenburg with the following letter:—

"Most worthy Father in God! It is now sometime since a new and unheard-of doctrine touching the apostolic indulgences began to make a noise in this country; the learned and the ignorant were troubled by it; and many persons, some known, some personally unknown to me, begged me to declare by sermon or by writing what I thought of the novelty, I will not say the impudence, of this doctrine. At first I was silent and kept in the background. But at last things came to such a pass, that the pope's holiness was compromised.

"What could I do? I thought it my duty neither to approve nor condemn these doctrines, but to originate a discussion on this important subject, until the holy Church should decide.

"As no one accepted the challenge I had given to the whole world, and since my theses have been considered, not as matters for discussion, but as positive assertions, I find myself compelled to publish an explanation of them. Condescend therefore to receive these trifles, which I present to you, most merciful bishop. And that all the world may see that I do not act presumptuously, I entreat your reverence to take pen

and ink, and blot out, or even throw into the fire and burn, anything that may offend you. I know that Jesus Christ needs neither my labours not my services, and that he will know how to proclaim his glad tidings to the Church without my aid. Not that the bulls and the threats of my enemies alarm me; quite the contrary. If they were not so impudent, so shameless, no one should hear of me; I would hide myself in a corner, and there study alone for my own good. If this affair is not God's, it certainly shall no longer be mine or any other man's, but a thing of nought. Let the honour and the glory be his to whom alone they belong!"

Luther was still filled with respect for the head of the Church. He supposed Leo to be a just man and a sincere lover of the truth.

He resolved, therefore, to write to him. A week after, on Trinity Sunday, 30th May 1518, he penned a letter, of which we give a few specimens.

"To the most blessed Father Leo X sovereign bishop, Martin Luther, an Augustine friar, wishes eternal salvation.

"I am informed, most holy Father, that wicked reports are in circulation about me, and that my name is in bad odour with your holiness. I am called a heretic, apostate, traitor, and a thousand other insulting names. What I see fills me with surprise, what I learn fills me with alarm. But the only foundation of my tranquillity remains,—a pure and peaceful conscience. Deign to listen to me, most holy Father,—to me who am but a child and unlearned."

After relating the origin of the whole matter, Luther thus continues:—

"In all the taverns nothing was heard but complaints against the avarice of the priests, and attacks against the power of the keys and of the sovereign bishop. Of this the whole of Germany is a witness. When I was informed of these things, my zeal was aroused for the glory of Christ, as it appeared to me; or, if another explanation be sought, my young and warm blood was inflamed.

"I forewarned several princes of the Church; but some laughed at me, and others turned a deaf ear. The terror of your name seemed to restrain everyone. I then published my disputation. "And behold, most holy Father, the conflagration that is reported to have set the whole world on fire.

"Now what shall I do? I cannot retract, and I see that this publication draws down upon me an inconceivable hatred from every side. I have no wish to appear

before the world; for I have no learning, no genius, and am far too little for such great matters; above all, in this illustrious age, in which Cicero himself, were he living, would be compelled to hide himself in some dark corner. "But in order to quiet my adversaries, and to reply to the solicitations of many friends, I here publish my thoughts. I publish them, holy Father, that I may be in greater safety under the shadow of your wings. All those who desire it will thus understand with what simplicity of heart I have called upon the ecclesiastical authority to intruct me, and what respect I have shown to the power of the keys. If I had not behaved with propriety, it would have been impossible for the most serene lord Frederick, duke and elector of Saxony, who shines among the friends of the apostolic and christian truth, to have ever endured in his university of Wittenberg a man so dangerous as I am asserted to be.

"For this reason, most holy Father, I fall at the feet of your holiness, and submit myself to you, with all that I have and with all that I am. Destroy my cause, or espouse it: declare me right or wrong; take away my life or restore it, as you please. I shall acknowledge your voice as the voice of Jesus Christ, who presides and speaks through you. If I have merited death, I shall not refuse to die; the earth is the Lord's, and all that is therein. May He be praised through all eternity! Amen. May he uphold you forever! Amen.

"Written the day of the Holy Trinity, in the year 1518.

"Martin Luther, Augustine Friar."

What humility and truth in Luther's fear, or rather in the avowal he makes that his warm young blood was perhaps too hastily inflamed! In this we behold the sincerity of a man who, presuming not on himself, dreads the influence of his passions in the very acts most in conformity with the Word of God. This language is widely different from that of a proud fanatic. We behold in Luther an earnest desire to gain over Leo to the cause of truth, to prevent all schism, and to cause the Reformation, the necessity of which he proclaims, to proceed from the head of the church. Assuredly it is not he who should be accused of destroying that unity in the Western Church which so many persons of all parties have since regretted. He sacrificed everything to maintain it;—everything except truth. It was not he, it was his adversaries, who, by refusing to acknowledge the fullness and sufficiency of the salvation wrought by Jesus Christ, rent our Saviour's vesture, even at the foot of the cross.

After writing this letter, and on the very same day, Luther wrote to his friend Staupitz, vicar-general of his order. It was by his instrumentality that he desired the Solutions and letter should reach Leo.

"I beg of you," says he, "to accept with kindness these trifles that I send you, and to forward them to the excellent Pope Leo X. Not that I desire by this to draw you into the peril in which I am involved; I am determined to encounter the danger alone. Jesus Christ will see if what I have said proceeds from Him or from me—Jesus Christ, without whose will the pope's tongue cannot move, and the hearts of kings cannot decide.

"As to those who threaten me, I reply in the words of Reuchlin:

'He who is poor has nothing to fear, since he has nothing to lose.' I have neither property nor money, and I do not desire any. If formerly I possessed any honour, any reputation, let Him who has begun to deprive me of them complete his task. All that is left to me is a wretched body, weakened by many trials. Should they kill me by stratagem or by force, to God be the glory! They will thus, perhaps, shorten my life by an hour or two. It is enough for me that I have a precious Redeemer, a powerful High Priest, Jesus Christ my Lord.

As long as I live will I praise him. If another will not unite with me in these praises, what is that to me?"

In these words we read Luther's inmost heart.

While he was thus looking with confidence towards Rome, Rome already entertained thoughts of vengeance against him. As early as the 3rd of April, Cardinal Raphael of Rovera had written to the Elector Frederick, in the pope's name, intimating that his orthodoxy was suspected, and cautioning him against protecting Luther. "Cardinal Raphael," said the latter, "would have had great pleasure in seeing me burnt by Frederick." Thus was Rome beginning to sharpen her weapons against Luther. It was through his protector's mind that she resolved to aim the first blow. If she succeeded in destroying that shelter under which the monk of Wittenberg was reposing, he would become an easy prey to her.

The German princes were very tenacious of their reputation for orthodoxy. The slightest suspicion of heresy filled them with alarm. The court of Rome had skillfully taken advantage of this disposition. Frederick, moreover, had always been attached to the religion of his forefathers, and hence Raphael's letter made a deep impression

on his mind. But it was a rule with the elector never to act precipitately. He knew that truth was not always on the side of the strongest. The disputes between the empire and Rome had taught him to mistrust the interested views of that court. He had found out that to be a christian prince, it was not necessary to be the pope's slave.

"He was not one of those profane persons," said Melancthon, "who order all changes to be arrested at their very commencement. Frederick submitted himself to God. He carefully perused the writings that appeared, and did not allow that to be destroyed which he believed to be true." It was not from want of power; for, besides being sovereign in his own states, he enjoyed in the empire a respect very little inferior to that which was paid to the emperor himself.

It is probable that Luther gained some information of this letter of Cardinal Raphael's, transmitted to the elector on the 7th July. Perhaps, it was the prospect of excommunication which this Roman missive seemed to forebode, that induced him to enter the pulpit of Wittenberg on the 15th of the same month, and to deliver a sermon on that subject, which made a deep impression. He drew a distinction between external and internal excommunication; the former excluding only from the services of the Church, the latter from communion with God. "No one," said he, "can reconcile the fallen sinner with God, except the Eternal One. No one can separate man from God, except man himself by his own sins. Blessed is he who dies under an unjust excommunication! While he suffers a grievous punishment at the hands of men for righteousness' sake, he receives from the hand of God the crown of everlasting happiness."

Some of the hearers loudly commended this bold language; others were still more exasperated by it. But Luther no longer stood alone; and although his faith required no other support than that of God, a phalanx which defended him against his enemies had grown up around him. The German people had heard the voice of the reformer. From his sermons and writings issued those flashes of light which aroused and illumined his contemporaries. The energy of his faith poured forth in torrents of fire on their frozen hearts. The life that God had placed in this extraordinary mind communicated itself to the dead body of the Church. Christendom, motionless for so many centuries, became animated with religious enthusiasm.

The people's attachment to the Romish superstitions diminished day by day; there were always fewer hands that offered money to purchase forgiveness; and at the same time Luther's reputation continued to increase. The people turned towards him, and saluted him with love and respect, as the intrepid defender of truth and liberty. Undoubtedly, all men did not see the depth of the doctrines he proclaimed.

For the greater number it was sufficient to know that he stood up against the pope, and that the dominion of the priests and monks was shaken by the might of his word. In their eyes, Luther's attack was like those beacon fires kindled on the mountains, which announce to a whole nation that the time to burst their chains has arrived. The reformer was not aware of what he had done, until the noble-minded portion of the nation had already hailed him as their leader. But for a great number also, Luther's coming was something more than this.

The Word of God, which he so skillfully wielded, pierced their hearts like a two-edged sword. In many bosoms was kindled an earnest desire of obtaining the assurance of pardon and eternal life. Since the primitive ages, the Church had never witnessed such hungering and thirsting after righteousness. If the eloquence of Peter the Hermit and of St. Bernard had inspired the people of the Middle Ages to assume a perishable cross, the eloquence of Luther prevailed on those of his day to take up the real cross,—the truth which saves. The scaffolding which then encumbered the Church had stifled everything; the form had destroyed the life. The powerful language given to this man diffused a quickening breath over the soil of Christendom. At the first outburst, Luther's writings had carried away believers and unbelievers alike: the unbelievers, because the positive doctrines that were afterwards to be settled had not been as yet fully developed; the believers, because their germs were found in that living faith which his writings proclaimed with so much power. Accordingly, the influence of these writings was immense; they filled in an instant Germany and the world.

Everywhere prevailed a secret conviction that men were about to witness, not the establishment of a sect, but a new birth of the Church and of society. Those who were then born of the breath of the Holy Ghost rallied around him who was its organ. Christendom was divided into two parties: the one contended with the spirit against the form, and the other with the form against the spirit. On the side of the form were, it is true, all the appearances of strength and grandeur; on the side of the spirit, is but a feeble body, which the first breath of wind may throw down. Its apparent power serves but to excite hostility and to precipitate its destruction. Thus, the simple Word of truth had raised a powerful army for Luther.

CHAPTER 2

Diet at Augsburg—The Emperor to the Pope—The Elector to Rovera—Luther summoned to Rome—Luther's Peace—Intercession of the University—Papal Brief—Luther's Indignation—The Pope to the Elector

This army was very necessary, for the nobles began to be alarmed, and the empire and the Church were already uniting their power to get rid of this troublesome monk. If a strong and courageous prince had then filled the imperial throne, he might have taken advantage of this religious agitation, and in reliance upon the Word of God and upon the nation, have given a fresh impulse to the ancient opposition against the papacy. But Maximilian was too old, and he had determined besides on making every sacrifice in order to maintain the great object of his life, the aggrandizement of his house, and consequently the elevation of his grandson. The emperor was at that time holding an imperial diet at Augsburg. Six electors had gone thither in person at his summons. All the Germanic states were there represented.

The kings of France, Hungary, and Poland had sent their ambassadors. These princes and envoys displayed great magnificence. The Turkish war was one of the causes for which the diet had been assembled. The legate of Leo X earnestly urged the meeting on this point. The states, learning wisdom from the bad use that had formerly been made of their contributions, and wisely counselled by the Elector Frederick, were satisfied with declaring they would reflect on the matter, and at the same time produced fresh complaints against Rome. A Latin discourse, published during the diet, boldly pointed out the real danger to the German princes. "You desire to put the Turk to flight," said the author. "This is well; but I am very much afraid that you are mistaken in the person. You should look for him in Italy, and not in Asia."

Another affair of no less importance was to occupy the diet. Maximilian desired to have his grandson Charles, already king of Spain and Naples, proclaimed king of the Romans, and his successor in the imperial dignity. The pope knew his own interests too well to desire to see the imperial throne filled by a prince whose power in Italy might be dangerous to himself. The emperor imagined he had already won over most of the electors and of the states; but he met with a vigorous resistance from Frederick. All solicitations proved unavailing; in vain did the ministers and the best friends of the elector unite their entreaties to those of the emperor; he was immovable, and showed on this occasion (as it has been remarked) that he had firmness of mind not to swerve from a resolution which he had once acknowledged to be just. The emperor's design failed.

Henceforward this prince sought to gain the goodwill of the pope, in order to render him favourable to his plans; and, to give a more striking proof of his attachment, he wrote to him as follows, on the 5th August: "Most holy Father, we have learnt these few days since that a friar of the Augustine order, named Martin Luther, has presumed to maintain certain propositions on the traffic of indulgences; a matter that displeases us the more because this friar has found many protectors, among whom are persons of exalted station. If your holiness, and the very reverend fathers of the Church (i.e. the cardinals) do not soon exert your authority to put an end to these scandals, these pernicious teachers will not only seduce the simple people, but they will involve great princes in their destruction. We will take care that whatever your holiness may decree in this matter for the glory of God Almighty shall be enforced throughout the whole empire."

This letter must have been written immediately after some warm discussion between Maximilian and Frederick. On the same day, the elector wrote to Raphael of Rovera. He had learnt, no doubt, that the emperor was writing to the Roman pontiff, and to parry the blow, he put himself in communication with Rome.

"I shall never have any other desire," says he, "than to show my submission to the universal Church.

"Accordingly, I have never defended either the writings or the sermons of Doctor Martin Luther. I learn, besides, that he has always offered to appear, under a safe-conduct, before impartial, learned, and christian judges, in order to defend his doctrine, and to submit, in case he should be convicted of error by the Scriptures themselves."

Leo X, who up to this time had let the business follow its natural course, aroused by the clamours of the theologians and monks, nominated an ecclesiastical commission at Rome empowered to try Luther, and in which Sylvester Prierio, the reformer's great enemy, was at once accuser and judge. The case was soon prepared, and the court summoned Luther to appear before it in person within sixty days.

Luther was tranquilly awaiting at Wittenberg the good effects that he imagined his submissive letter to the pope would produce, when on the 7th August, two days only after the letters of Maximilian and of Frederick were sent off, he received the summons of the Roman tribunal. "At the very moment I was expecting a blessing," said he, "I saw the thunderbolt fall upon me. I was the lamb that troubled the water the wolf was drinking. Tetzel escaped, and I was to permit myself to be devoured."

This summons caused general alarm in Wittenberg; for whatever course Luther might take he could not escape danger. If he went to Rome, he would there become the victim of his enemies. If he refused to appear, he would be condemned for contumacy, as was usual, without the power of escaping; for it was known that the legate had received orders to do everything he could to exasperate the emperor and the German princes against the doctor. His friends were filled with consternation. Shall the preacher of truth risk his life in that great city drunk with the blood of the saints and of the martyrs of Jesus? Shall a head be raised in the midst of enslaved Christendom, only to fall? Shall this man also be struck down—this man whom God appears to have formed to withstand a power that hitherto nothing had been able to resist? Luther himself saw that no one could save him but the elector; yet he would rather die than compromise his prince. At last his friends agreed on an expedient that would not endanger Frederick. Let him refuse Luther a safe-conduct, and then the reformer would have a legitimate excuse for not appearing at Rome.

On the 8th August, Luther wrote to Spalatin begging him to employ his influence with the elector to have his cause heard in Germany. "See what snares they are laying for me," wrote he also to Staupitz, "and how I am surrounded with thorns. But Christ lives and reigns, the same yesterday, today, and forever. My conscience assures me that I have been teaching the truth, although it appears still more odious because I teach it. The Church is the womb of Rebecca. The children must struggle together, even to the risk of the mother's life. As for the rest, pray the Lord that I feel not too much joy in this trial. May God not lay this sin to their charge."

Luther's friends did not confine themselves to consultations and complaints. Spalatin wrote, on the part of the elector, to Renner the emperor's secretary: "Doctor Martin Luther willingly consents to be judged by all the universities of Germany, except Leipsic, Erfurth, and Frankforton the Oder, which have shown themselves partial. It is impossible for him to appear at Rome in person."

The university of Wittenberg wrote a letter of intercession to the pope: "The weakness of his frame," they said, speaking of Luther, "and the dangers of the journey, render it difficult and even impossible for him to obey the order of your holiness. His distress and his prayers incline us to sympathize with him. We therefore entreat you, most holy Father, as obedient children, to look upon him as a man who has never been tainted with doctrines opposed to the tenets of the Roman Church."

The university, in its solicitude, wrote the same day to Charles of Miltitz, a Saxon gentleman and the pope's chamberlain, in high estimation with Leo X. In this letter they gave Luther a more decided testimony than they had ventured to insert in the

first. "The reverend father Martin Luther, an Augustine," it ran, "is the noblest and most distinguished member of our university. For many years we have seen and known his talents, his learning, his profound acquaintance with the arts and literature, his irreproachable morals, and his truly christian behaviour."

This active charity shown by all who surrounded Luther is his noblest panegyric.

While men were anxiously looking for the result of this affair, it was terminated more easily than might have been expected. The legate De Vio, mortified at his ill success in the commission he had received to excite a general war against the Turks, wished to exalt and give lustre to his embassy in Germany by some other brilliant act. He thought that if he could extinguish heresy he should return to Rome with honour. He therefore entreated the pope to intrust this business to him. Leo for his part was highly pleased with Frederick for his strong opposition to the election of the youthful Charles. He felt that he might yet stand in need of his support. Without farther reference to the summons, he commissioned the legate, by a brief dated 23rd August, to investigate the affair in Germany. The pope lost nothing by this course of proceeding; and even if Luther could not be prevailed on to retract, the noise and scandal that his presence at Rome must have occasioned would be avoided.

"We charge you," said Leo, "to summon personally before you, to prosecute and constrain without any delay, and as soon as you shall have received this paper from us, the said Luther, who has already been declared a heretic by our dear brother Jerome, bishop of Ascoli."

The pope then proceeded to utter the severest threats against Luther:

"Invoke for this purpose the arm and the aid of our very dear son in Christ, Maximilian, and of the other princes of Germany, and of all the communities, universities, and potentates, ecclesiastic or secular. And, if you get possession of his person, keep him in safe custody, that he may be brought before us."

We see that this indulgent concession from the pope was only a surer way of inveigling Luther to Rome. Next followed milder measures:

"If he return to his duty, and beg forgiveness for so great a misdeed, of his own accord and without solicitation, we give you power to receive him into the unity of our holy mother the Church."

The pope soon returned to his maledictions: "If he persist in his obstinacy, and you cannot secure his person, we authorise you to proscribe him in every part of Germany; to banish, curse, and excommunicate all those who are attached to him; and to order all Christians to flee from their presence."

Still this was not enough:

"And in order that this contagious disease may be the more effectually eradicated," continued the pope, "you will excommunicate all prelates, religious orders, universities, communities, counts, dukes, and potentates (the Emperor Maximilian always excepted), who shall not aid in seizing the aforesaid Martin Luther and his adherents, and send them to you under good and safe guard.—And if, which God forbid, the said princes, communities, universities, and potentates, or any belonging to them, shall in any manner offer an asylum to the said Martin and his adherents, give him privately or publicly, by themselves or by others, succor and counsel, we lay under interdict all these princes, communities, universities, and potentates, with their cities, towns, countries, and villages, as well as the cities, towns, countries, and villages in which the said Martin may take refuge, so long as he shall remain there, and three days after he shall have quitted them."

This audacious see, which claims to be the earthly representative of him who said: God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved, continues its anathemas; and after pronouncing the penalties against ecclesiastics, goes on to say:

"As for the laymen, if they do not immediately obey your orders without delay or opposition, we declare them infamous (the most worthy emperor always excepted), incapable of performing any lawful act, deprived of christian burial, and stripped of all the fiefs they may hold either from the apostolic see, or from any lord whatsoever."

Such was the fate destined for Luther. The monarch of Rome has invoked everything for his destruction. Nothing was spared, not even the quiet of the grave. His ruin appears certain. How can he escape from this vast conspiracy? But Rome was deceived; the movement, begun by the Spirit of God, cannot be checked by the decrees of her chancery.

The pope had not even preserved the appearances of a just and impartial examination. Luther had been declared a heretic, not only before he had been heard, but even before the expiration of the time allowed for his appearance. The passions, and never do they show themselves more violently than in religious discussions,

overleap all forms of justice. It is not only in the Roman church, but in the Protestant churches that have turned aside from the Gospel, and wherever the truth is not found, that we meet with such strange proceedings in this respect. Everything is lawful against the Gospel. We frequently see men who in every other case would scruple to commit the least injustice, not fearing to trample under foot all rule and law, whenever Christianity, or the testimony that is paid to it, is concerned.

When Luther became acquainted with this brief, he thus expressed his indignation:

"This is the most remarkable part of the affair: the brief was issued on the 23rd August—I was summoned on the 7th—so that between the brief and the summons sixteen days elapsed. Now, make the calculation, and you will find that my Lord Jerome, bishop of Ascoli, proceeded against me, pronounced judgment, condemned me, and declared me a heretic, before the summons reached me, or at the most within sixteen days after it had been forwarded to me. Now, where are the sixty days accorded me in the summons? They began on the 7th August, they should end on the 7th October Is this the style and fashion of the Roman court, which on the same day summons, exhorts, accuses, judges, condemns, and declares a man guilty who is so far from Rome, and who knows nothing of all these things? What reply can they make to this? No doubt they forgot to clear their brains with hellebore before having recourse to such trickery."

But while Rome secretly deposited her thunders in the hands of her legate, she sought by sweet and flattering words to detach from Luther's cause the prince whose power she dreaded most. On the same day (23rd August 1518), the pope wrote to the Elector of Saxony. He had recourse to the wiles of that ancient policy which we have already noticed, and endeavoured to flatter the prince's vanity.

"Dear son," wrote the pontiff, "when we think of your noble and worthy family; of you who are its ornament and head; when we call to mind how you and your ancestors have always desired to uphold the christian faith, and the honour and dignity of the holy see, we cannot believe that a man who abandons the faith can rely upon your highness's favour, and daringly give the rein to his wickedness. Yet it is reported to us from every quarter that a certain friar, Martin Luther, hermit of the order of St. Augustine, has forgotten, like a child of the evil one and despiser of God, his habit and his order, which consists in humility and obedience, and that he boasts of fearing neither the authority nor the punishment of any man, being assured of your favour and protection.

"But as we know that he is deceived, we have thought fit to write to your highness, and to exhort you in the Lord to watch over the honour of your name, as a christian prince, the ornament, glory, and sweet savour of your noble family; to defend yourself from these calumnies; and to guard yourself not only from so serious a crime as that imputed to you, but still further even from the suspicion that the rash presumption of this friar ends to bring upon you."

Leo X at the same time informed the elector that he had commissioned the cardinal of St. Sixtus to investigate the matter, and requested him to deliver Luther into the legate's hands, "for fear," added he, still returning to his first argument, "the pious people of our own or of future times should one day lament and say: The most pernicious heresy with which the Church of God has been afflicted sprung up under the favour and support of that high and worthy family."

Thus had Rome taken her measures. With one hand she scattered the intoxicating incense of flattery; in the other she held concealed her terrors and revenge.

All the powers of the earth, emperor, pope, princes, and legates, began to rise up against this humble friar of Erfurth, whose internal struggles we have already witnessed. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel against the Lord, and against his anointed.

CHAPTER 3

The Armorer Schwartzerd—His Wife—Philip—His Genius and Studies—The Bible—Call to Wittenberg—Melancthon's Departure and Journey—Leipsic—Mistake—Luther's Joy—Parallel—Revolution in Education—Study of Greek

Before this letter and the brief had reached Germany, and while Luther was still afraid of being compelled to appear at Rome, a fortunate event brought consolation to his heart. He needed a friend into whose bosom he could pour out his sorrows, and whose faithful affection would comfort him in his hours of dejection. God gave him such a friend in Melancthon.

George Schwartzerd was a skilful masterarmourer of Bretten, a small town in the palatinate. On the 14th of February 1497, his wife bore him a son, who was named Philip, and who became famous in after-years under the name of Melancthon. George, who was highly esteemed by the palatine princes, and by those of Bavaria and Saxony, was a man of perfect integrity. Frequently he would refuse from purchasers the price they offered him; and if he found they were poor, would compel them to take back their money. It was his habit to leave his bed at midnight, and offer a fervent prayer upon his knees. If the morning came without his having performed this pious duty, he was dissatisfied with himself all the rest of the day. His wife Barbara was the daughter of a respectable magistrate named John Reuter. She possessed a tender disposition, rather inclined to superstition, but in other respects discreet and prudent. To her we are indebted for these well-known German rhymes:—

Almsgiving impoverisheth not. Churchgoing hindereth not. To grease the car delayeth not. Ill-gotten wealth profiteth not. God's book deceiveth not.

And the following rhymes also:—Those who love to squander More than their fields render, Will surely come to ruin, Or a rope be their undoing.

Philip was not eleven years old when his father died. Two days before he expired, George called his son to his bedside, and exhorted him to have the fear of God constantly before his eyes. "I foresee," said the dying armourer, "that terrible tempests are about to shake the world. I have witnessed great things, but greater still are preparing. May God direct and guide thee!" After Philip had received his father's blessing, he was sent to Spire that he might not be present at his parent's death. He departed weeping bitterly.

The lad's grandfather, the worthy bailiff Reuter, who himself had a son, performed a father's duty to Philip, and took him and his brother George into his own house. Shortly after this he engaged John Hungarus to teach the three boys. The tutor was an excellent man, and in after-years proclaimed the Gospel with great energy, even to an advanced age. He overlooked nothing in the young man. He punished him for every fault, but with discretion: "It is thus," said Melancthon in 1554, "that he made a scholar of me. He loved me as a son, I loved him as a father; and we shall meet, I hope, in heaven."

Philip was remarkable for the excellence of his understanding, and his facility in learning and explaining what he had learnt. He could not remain idle, and was always looking for someone to discuss with him the things he had heard. It frequently happened that well-educated foreigners passed through Bretten and visited Reuter. Immediately the bailiff's grandson would go up to them, enter into conversation, and press them so hard in the discussion that the hearers were filled with admiration. With strength of genius he united great gentleness, and thus won the favour of all. He stammered; but like the illustrious Grecian orator, he so diligently set about correcting this defect, that in afterlife no traces of it could be perceived.

On the death of his grandfather, the youthful Philip with his brother and his young uncle John, was sent to the school at Pforzheim. These lads resided with one of their relations, sister to the famous Reuchlin. Eager in the pursuit of knowledge, Philip, under tuition of George Simmler, made rapid progress in learning, and particularly in Greek, of which he was passionately fond. Reuchlin frequently came to Pforzheim. At his sister's house he became acquainted with her young boarders, and was soon struck with Philip's replies. He presented him with a Greek Grammar and a Bible. These two books were to be the study of his whole life.

When Reuchlin returned from his second journey to Italy, his young relative, then twelve years old, celebrated the day of his arrival by representing before him, with the aid of some friends, a Latin comedy which he had himself composed. Reuchlin, charmed with the young man's talents, tenderly embraced him, called him his dear son, and placed sportively upon his head the red hat he had received when he had been made doctor. It was at this time that Reuchlin changed the name of Schwartzerd into that of Melancthon; both words, the one in German and the other in Greek, signifying black earth. Most of the learned men of that age thus translated their names into Greek or Latin.

Melancthon, at twelve years of age, went to the University of Heidelberg, and here he began to slake his ardent thirst for knowledge. He took his bachelor's degree

at fourteen. In 1512, Reuchlin invited him to Tubingen, where many learned men were assembled. He attended by turns the lectures of the theologians, doctors, and lawyers. There was no branch of knowledge that he deemed unworthy his study. Praise was not his object, but the possession and the fruits of learning.

The Holy Scriptures especially engaged his attention. Those who frequented the church of Tubingen had remarked that he frequently held a book in his hands, which he was occupied in reading between the services. This unknown volume appeared larger than the prayer books, and a report was circulated that Philip used to read profane authors during those intervals. But the suspected book proved to be a copy of the Holy Scriptures, printed shortly before at Basle by John Frobenius. All his life he continued this study with the most unceasing application. He always carried this precious volume with him, even to the public assemblies to which he was invited. Rejecting the empty systems of the schoolmen, he adhered to the plain word of the Gospel. "I entertain the most distinguished and splendid expectations of Melancthon," wrote Erasmus to Oecolampadius about this time; "God grant that this young man may long survive us. He will entirely eclipse Erasmus." Nevertheless, Melancthon shared in the errors of his age. "I shudder," he observed at an advanced period of his life, "when I think of the honour I paid to images, while I was yet a papist."

In 1514, he was made doctor of philosophy, and then began to teach. He was seventeen years old. The grace and charm that he imparted to his lessons, formed the most striking contrast to the tasteless method which the doctors, and above all the monks, had pursued till then. He took an active part in the struggle in which Reuchlin was engaged with the learning-haters of the day. Agreeable in conversation, mild and elegant in his manners, beloved by all who knew him, he soon acquired great authority and solid reputation in the learned world.

It was at this time that the elector formed the design of inviting some distinguished scholar to the university of Wittenberg, as professor of the ancient languages. He applied to Reuchlin, who recommended Melancthon. Frederick foresaw the celebrity that this young man would confer on an institution so dear to him, and Reuchlin, charmed at beholding so noble a career opening before his young friend, wrote to him these words of the Almighty to Abraham: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, and I will make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing. Yea," continued the old man, "I hope that it will be so with thee, my dear Philip, my handiwork and my consolation." In this invitation Melancthon acknowledged a call from God. At his departure the university was filled with sorrow; yet it contained individuals who were jealous and envious of him. He left

his native place, exclaiming: "The Lord's will be done!" He was then twentyone years of age.

Melancthon travelled on horseback, in company with several Saxon merchants, as a traveller joins a caravan in the deserts; for, says Reuchlin, he was unacquainted both with the roads and the country. He presented his respects to the elector, whom he found at Augsburg. At Nuremberg he saw the excellent Pirckheimer, whom he had known before; at Leipsic he formed an acquaintance with the learned hellenist Mosellanus. The university of this last city gave a banquet in his honour. The repast was academical. The dishes succeeded one another in great variety, and at each new dish one of the professors rose and addressed Melancthon in a Latin speech he had prepared beforehand. The latter immediately replied extemporaneously. At last, wearied with so much eloquence, he said: "Most illustrious men, permit me to reply to your harangues once for all; for, being unprepared, I cannot put such varieties into my answers as you have done in your addresses." After this, the dishes were brought in without accompaniment of a speech.

Reuchlin's youthful relative arrived in Wittenberg on the 25th August 1518, two days after Leo X had signed the brief addressed to Cajetan, and the letter to the elector.

The Wittenberg professors did not receive Melancthon so favourably as those of Leipsic had done. The first impression he made on them did not correspond with their expectations. They saw a young man, who appeared younger than he really was, of small stature, and with a feeble and timid air. Was this the illustrious doctor whom Erasmus and Reuchlin, the greatest men of the day, extolled so highly? Neither Luther, with whom he first became acquainted, nor his colleagues, entertained any great hopes of him when they saw his youth, his shyness, and his diffident manners.

On the 29th August, four days after his arrival, he delivered his inaugural discourse. All the university was assembled. This lad, as Luther, calls him, spoke in such elegant latinity, and showed so much learning, an understanding so cultivated, and a judgment so sound, that all his hearers were struck with admiration.

When the speech was finished, all crowded round him with congratulations; but no one felt more joy than Luther. He hastened to impart to his friends the sentiments that filled his heart. "Melancthon," wrote he to Spalatin on the 31st August, "delivered four days after his arrival so learned and so beautiful a discourse, that everyone listened with astonishment and admiration. We soon recovered from the prejudices excited by his stature and appearance; we now praise and admire his

eloquence; we return our thanks to you and to the prince for the service you have done us. I ask for no other Greek master. But I fear that his delicate frame will be unable to support our mode of living, and that we shall be unable to keep him long on account of the smallness of his salary. I hear that the Leipsic people are already boasting of their power to take him from us. O my dear Spalatin, beware of despising his age and his personal appearance. He is a man worthy of every honour."

Melancthon began immediately to lecture on Homer and the Epistle of St. Paul to Titus. He was full of ardour. "I will make every effort," wrote he to Spalatin, "to conciliate the favour of all those in Wittenberg who love learning and virtue." Four days after his inauguration, Luther wrote again to Spalatin: "I most particularly recommend to you the very learned and very amiable Grecian, Philip.

His lectureroom is always full. All the theologians in particular go to hear him. He is making every class, upper, lower, and middle, begin to read Greek."

Melancthon was able to respond to Luther's affection. He soon found in him a kindness of disposition, a strength of mind, a courage, a discretion, that he had never found till then in any man. He venerated, he loved him. "If there is anyone, said he, "whom I dearly love, and whom I embrace with my whole heart, it is Martin Luther."

Thus did Luther and Melancthon meet; they were friends until death. We cannot too much admire the goodness and wisdom of God, in bringing together two men so different, and yet so necessary to one another. Luther possessed warmth, vigour, and strength; Melancthon clearness, discretion, and mildness. Luther gave energy to Melancthon, Melancthon moderated Luther. They were like substances in a state of positive and negative electricity, which mutually act upon each other. If Luther had been without Melancthon, perhaps the torrent would have overflowed its banks; Melancthon, when Luther was taken from him by death, hesitated and gave way, even where he should not have yielded. Luther did much by power; Melancthon perhaps did less by following a gentler and more tranquil method. Both were upright, openhearted, generous; both ardently loved the Word of eternal life, and obeyed it with a fidelity and devotion that governed their whole lives.

Melancthon's arrival at Wittenberg effected a revolution not only in that university, but in the whole of Germany and in all the learned world. The attention he had bestowed on the Greek and Latin classics and on philosophy had given a regularity, clearness, and precision to his ideas, which shed a new light and an indescribable beauty on every subject that he took in hand. The mild spirit of the Gospel fertilised and animated his meditations, and in his lectures the driest pursuits

were clothed with a surpassing grace that captivated all hearers. The barrenness that scholasticism had cast over education was at an end. A new manner of teaching and of studying began with Melancthon. "Thanks to him," says an illustrious German historian, "Wittenberg became the school of the nation."

It was indeed highly important that a man who knew Greek thoroughly should teach in that university, where the new developments of theology called upon masters and pupils to study in their original language the earliest documents of the christian faith. From this time Luther zealously applied to the task. The meaning of a Greek word, of which he had been ignorant until then, suddenly cleared up his theological ideas. What consolation and what joy did he not feel, when he saw, for instance, that the Greek word metanoia, which, according to the Latin Church, signifies a penance, a satisfaction required by the Church, a human expiation, really meant in Greek a transformation or conversion of the heart! A thick midst was suddenly rolled away from before his eyes. The two significations given to this word suffice of themselves to characterise the two Churches.

The impulse Melancthon gave to Luther in the translation of the Bible is one of the most remarkable circumstances of the friendship between these two great men. As early as 1517, Luther had made some attempts at translation. He had procured as many Greek and Latin books as were within his reach. And now, with the aid of his dear Philip, he applied to his task with fresh energy. Luther compelled Melancthon to share in his researches; consulted him on the difficult passages: and the work, which was destined to be one of the great labours of the reformer, advanced more safely and more speedily.

Melancthon, on his side, became acquainted with the new theology. The beautiful and profound doctrine of justification by faith filled him with astonishment and joy; but he received with independence the system taught by Luther, and moulded it to the peculiar form of his mind; for, although he was only twenty-one years old, he was one of those precocious geniuses who attain early to a full possession of all their powers, and who think for themselves from the very first.

The zeal of the teachers was soon communicated to the disciples. It was decided to reform the method of instruction. With the elector's consent, certain courses that possessed a merely scholastic importance were suppressed; at the same time the study of the classics received a fresh impulse. The school of Wittenberg was transformed, and the contrast with other universities became daily more striking. All this, however, took place within the limits of the Church, and none suspected they were on the eve of a great contest with the pope.

CHAPTER 4

Sentiments of Luther and Staupitz—Summons to appear—Alarm and Courage—The Elector with the Legate—Departure for Augsburg—Sojourn at Weimar—Nuremberg—Arrival at Augsburg

No doubt Melancthon's arrival at a moment so critical brought a pleasing change to the current of Luther's thoughts; no doubt, in the sweet outpourings of a dawning friendship, and in the midst of the biblical labours to which he devoted himself with fresh zeal, he sometimes forgot Rome, Prierio, Leo, and the ecclesiastical court before which he was to appear. Yet these were but fugitive moments, and his thoughts always returned to that formidable tribunal before which his implacable enemies had summoned him. With what terror would not such thoughts have filled a soul whose object had been anything else than the truth! But Luther did not tremble; confident in the faithfulness and power of God, he remained firm, and was ready to expose himself alone to the anger of enemies more terrible than those who had kindled John Huss's pile.

A few days after Melancthon's arrival, and before the resolution of the pope transferring Luther's citation from Rome to Augsburg could be known, the latter wrote to Spalatin: "I do not require that our sovereign should do the least thing in defence of my theses; I am willing to be given up and thrown into the hands of my adversaries. Let him permit all the storm to burst upon me. What I have undertaken to defend, I hope to be able to maintain, with the help of Christ. As for violence, we must needs yield to that, but without abandoning the truth."

Luther's courage was infectious: the mildest and most timid men, as they beheld the danger that threatened this witness to the truth, found language full of energy and indignation. The prudent, the pacific Staupitz wrote to Spalatin on the 7th September: "Do not cease to exhort the prince, your master and mine, not to allow himself to be frightened by the roaring of the lions. Let him defend the truth, without anxiety either about Luther, Staupitz, or the order. Let there be one place at least where men may speak freely and without fear. I know that the plague of Babylon, I was nearly saying of Rome, is let loose against whoever attacks the abuses of those who sell Jesus Christ. I have myself seen a preacher thrown from the pulpit for teaching the truth; I saw him, although it was a festival, bound and dragged to prison. Others have witnessed still more cruel sights. For this reason, dearest Spalatin, prevail upon his highness to continue in his present sentiments."

At last the order to appear before the cardinal legate at Augsburg arrived. It was now with one of the princes of the Roman church that Luther had to deal. All his friends entreated him not to set out. They feared that even during the journey snares might be laid for his life. Some busied themselves in finding an asylum for him. Staupitz himself, the timid Staupitz, was moved at the thought of the dangers to which brother Martin would be exposed—that brother whom he had dragged from the seclusion of the cloister, and whom he had launched on that agitated sea in which his life was now endangered. Alas! would it not have been better for the poor brother to have remained for ever unknown! It was too late. At least he would do everything in his power to save him. Accordingly he wrote from his convent at Salzburg, on the 15th September, soliciting Luther to flee and seek an asylum with him. "It appears to me," said he, "that the whole world is enraged and combined against the truth. The crucified Jesus was hated in like manner. I do not see that you have anything else to expect but persecution. Erelong no one will be able without the pope's permission to search the Scriptures, and therein look for Jesus Christ, which Jesus Christ however commands. You have but few friends: I would to God that fear of your adversaries did not prevent those few from declaring themselves in your favour! The wisest course is for you to abandon Wittenberg for a season and come to me. Then we shall live and die together. This is also the prince's opinion," adds Staupitz.

From different quarters Luther received the most alarming intelligence. Count Albert of Mansfeldt bid him beware of undertaking the journey, for several powerful lords had sworn to seize his person, and strangle or drown him. But nothing could frighten him. He had no intention of profiting by the vicar-general's offer. He will not go and conceal himself in the obscurity of a convent at Salzburg; he will remain faithfully on that stormy scene where the hand of God has placed him. It is by persevering in despite of his adversaries, by proclaiming the truth aloud in the midst of the world, that the reign of truth advances. Why then should he flee? He is not one of those who draw back to perish, but of those who keep the faith to the saving of their souls. This expression of the Master whom he desires to serve, and whom he loves more than life, reechoes incessantly in his heart: Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. At all times do we find in Luther and in the Reformation this intrepid courage, this exalted morality, this infinite charity, which the first advent of Christianity had already made known to the world.

"I am like Jeremiah," says Luther at the time of which we are speaking, "a man of strife and contention; but the more their threats increase, the more my joy is multiplied. My wife and my children are well provided for; my fields, my houses, and my goods are in order. They have already destroyed my honour and my

reputation. One single thing remains; it is my wretched body: let them take it; they will thus shorten my life by a few hours. But as for my soul, they cannot take that. He who desires to proclaim the Word of Christ to the world, must expect death at every moment; for our husband is a bloody husband to us." The elector was then at Augsburg. Shortly before quitting the diet in that city, he had paid the legate a visit. The cardinal, highly flattered with this condescension from so illustrious a prince, promised Frederick, that if the monk appeared before him, he would listen to him in a paternal manner, and dismiss him kindly. Spalatin, by the prince's order, wrote to his friend, that the pope had appointed a commission to hear him in Germany; that the elector would not permit him to be dragged to Rome; and that he must prepare for his journey to Augsburg. Luther resolved to obey. The notice he had received from the count of Mansfeldt induced him to ask a safe-conduct from Frederick. The latter replied that it was unnecessary, and sent him only letters of recommendation to some of the most distinguished councillors of Augsburg. He also provided him with money for the journey; and the poor defenseless reformer set out on foot to place himself in the hands of his enemies.

What must have been his feelings as he quitted Wittenberg and took the road to Augsburg, where the pope's legate awaited him! The object of this journey was not like that to Heidelberg, a friendly meeting; he was about to appear before the Roman delegate without a safe-conduct perhaps he was going to death. But his faith was not one of mere outward show; with him it was a reality. Hence it gave him peace, and he could advance without fear, in the name of the Lord of hosts, to bear his testimony to the Gospel.

He arrived at Weimar on the 28th September, and lodged in the Cordeliers' monastery. One of the monks could not take his eyes off him; it was Myconius. He then saw Luther for the first time; he wished to approach him, to say that he was indebted to him for peace of mind, and that his whole desire was to labour with him. But Myconius was too strictly watched by his superiors: he was not allowed to speak to Luther.

The Elector of Saxony was then holding his court at Weimar, and it is on this account probably that the Cordeliers gave the doctor a welcome. The day following his arrival was the festival of St. Michael. Luther said mass, and was invited to preach in the palacechapel. This was a mark of favour his prince loved to confer on him. He preached extempore, in presence of the court, selecting his text (Matthew, chap. 18. verses 1 to 11) from the gospel of the day. He spoke forcibly against hypocrites, and those who boast of their own righteousness. But he said not a word

about angels, although such was the custom of St. Michael's day.

The courage of the Wittenberg doctor, who was going quietly and on foot to answer a summons which had terminated in death to so many of his predecessors, astonished all who saw him. Interest, admiration, and sympathy prevailed by turns in their hearts. John Kestner, purveyor to the Cordeliers, struck with apprehension at the thought of the dangers which awaited his guest, said to him: "Brother, in Augsburg you will meet with Italians, who are learned men and subtle antagonists, and who will give you enough to do. I fear you will not be able to defend your cause against them. They will cast you into the fire, and their flames will consume you." Luther solemnly replied: "Dear friend, pray to our Lord God who is in heaven and put up a paternoster for me and for his dear Son Jesus, whose cause is mine, that he may be favourable to him. If He maintains his cause, mine is maintained; but if he will not maintain it, of a truth it is not I who can maintain it, and it is he who will bear the dishonour."

Luther continued his journey on foot, and arrived at Nuremberg. As he was about to present himself before a prince of the Church, he wished to appear in a becoming dress. His own was old, and all the worse for the journey. He therefore borrowed a frock from his faithful friend Wenceslas Link, preacher at Nuremberg.

Luther doubtless did not confine his visits to Link; he saw in like manner his other Nuremberg friends, Scheurl the town clerk, the illustrious painter Albert Durer (to whose memory that city has recently erected a statue), and others besides. He derived strength from the conversation of these excellent ones of the earth, while many monks and laymen felt alarm at his journey, and endeavoured to shake his resolution, beseeching him to retrace his steps. The letters he wrote from this city show the spirit which then animated him: "I have met," said he, "with pusillanimous men who wish to persuade me not to go to Augsburg; but I am resolved to proceed. The Lord's will be done! Even at Augsburg, even in the midst of his enemies, Christ reigns. Let Christ live; let Luther die, and every sinner, according as it is written! May the God of my salvation be exalted! Farewell! persevere, stand fast; for it is necessary to be rejected either by God or by man: but God is true, and man is a liar."

Link and an Augustine monk named Leonard could not make up their minds to permit Luther to go alone to face the dangers that threatened him. They knew his disposition and were aware that, abounding as he did in determination and courage, he would probably be wanting in prudence. They therefore accompanied him. When they were about five leagues from Augsburg, Luther, whom the fatigues of the journey and the various agitations of his mind had probably exhausted, was seized with

violent pains in the stomach. He thought he should die. His two friends in great alarm hired a wagon in which they placed the doctor. On the evening of the 7th October they reached Augsburg, and alighted at the Augustine convent. Luther was very tired; but he soon recovered. No doubt his faith and the vivacity of his mind speedily recruited his weakened body.

CHAPTER 5

De Vio—His Characters—Serra Longa—Preliminary Conversation—Visit of the Councillors—Return of Serra Longa—The Prior—Luther's Discretion—Luther and Serra Longa—The Safeconduct—Luther to Melancthon

Immediately on his arrival, and before seeing anyone, Luther, desirous of showing the legate all due respect, begged Link to go and announce his presence. Link did so, and respectfully informed the cardinal, on the part of the Wittenberg doctor, that the latter was ready to appear before him whenever he should give the order. The legate was delighted at this news. At last he had this impetuous heretic within his reach, and promised himself that the reformer should not quit the walls of Augsburg as he had entered them. At the same time that Link waited upon the legate, the monk Leonard went to inform Staupitz of Luther's arrival. The vicar-general had written to the doctor that he would certainly come and see him as soon as he knew that he had reached Augsburg. Luther was unwilling to lose a minute in informing him of his presence.

The diet was over. The emperor and the electors had already separated. The emperor, it is true, had not yet quitted the place, but was hunting in the neighbourhood. The ambassador of Rome remained alone in Augsburg. If Luther had gone thither during the diet, he would have met with powerful supporters; but everything now seemed destined to bend beneath the weight of the papal authority.

The name of the judge before whom Luther was to appear was not calculated to encourage him. Thomas de Vio, surnamed Cajetan, from the town of Gaeta in the kingdom if Naples, where he was born in 1469, had given great promise from his youth. At sixteen, he had entered the Dominican order, contrary to the express will of his parents. He had afterwards become general of his order, and cardinal of the Roman Church. But what was worse for Luther, this learned doctor was one of the most zealous defenders of that scholastic theology which the reformer had always treated during her pregnancy that St. Thomas in person would instruct the child to which she was about to give birth, and would introduce him into heaven. Accordingly De Vio, when he became a Dominican, had changed his name from James to Thomas. He had zealously defended the prerogatives of the papacy, and the doctrines of Thomas Aquinas, whom he looked upon as the pearl of theologians. Fond of pageantry and show, he construed almost seriously the Roman maxim, that legates are above kings, and surrounded himself with a brilliant train.

On the 1st August, he had performed a solemn mass in the cathedral of Augsburg, and, in the presence of all the princes of the empire, had placed the cardinal's hat on the head of the Archbishop of Mentz, who knelt before him, and had delivered to the emperor himself the hat and sword which the pope had consecrated. Such was the man before whom the Wittenberg monk was about to appear, dressed in a frock that did not belong to him. Further, the legate's learning, the austerity of his disposition, and the purity of his morals, ensured him an influence and authority in Germany that other Roman courtiers would not easily have obtained. It was no doubt to this reputation for sanctity that he owed this mission. Rome perceived that it would admirably forward her designs. Thus even the good qualities of Cajetan rendered him still more formidable. Besides, the affair intrusted to him was by no means complicated. Luther was already declared a heretic. If he would not retract, the legate must send him to prison; and if he escaped, whoever should give him an asylum was to be excommunicated. This was what the dignitary of the Church, before whom Luther was summoned, had to perform on behalf of Rome.

Luther had recovered his strength during the night. On Saturday morning (8th October), being already reinvigorated after his journey, he began to consider his strange position. He was resigned, and awaited the manifestation of God's will by the course of events. He had not long to wait. A person, unknown to him, sent to say (as if entirely devoted to him) that he was about to pay him a visit, and that Luther should avoid appearing before the legate until after this interview. The message proceeded from an Italian courtier named Urban of Serra Longa, who had often visited Germany as envoy from the Margrave of Montferrat. He had known the Elector of Saxony, to whom he had been accredited, and after the margrave's death, he had attached himself to the Cardinal de Vio.

The art and address of this individual presented the most striking contrast with the noble frankness and generous integrity of Luther. The Italian soon arrived at the Augustine monastery. The cardinal had sent him to sound the reformer, and prepare him for the recantation expected from him. Serra Longa imagined that his sojourn in Germany had given him a great advantage over the other courtiers in the legate's train; he hoped to make short work with this German monk. He arrived attended by two domestics, and professed to have come of his own accord, from friendship towards a favourite of the Elector of Saxony, and from attachment to the holy Church. After having most cordially saluted Luther, the diplomatist added in an affectionate manner:

"I am come to offer you good advice. Be wise, and become reconciled with the Church. Submit to the cardinal without reserve. Retract your offensive language.

Remember the Abbot Joachim of Florence: he had published, as you know, many heretical things, and yet he was declared no heretic, because he retracted his errors."

Upon this Luther spoke of justifying what he had done.

Serra Longa.—"Beware of that!" Would you enter the lists against the legate of his holiness?"

Luther.—"If they convince me of having taught anything contrary to the Roman Church, I shall be my own judge, and immediately retract. The essential point will be to know whether the legate relies on the authority of St. Thomas more than the faith will sanction. If he does so, I will not yield."

Serra Longa.—"Oh, oh! You intend to break a lance then!" The Italian then began to use language which Luther styles horrible. He argued that one might maintain false propositions, provided they brought in money and filled the treasury; that all discussion in the universities against the pope's authority must be avoided; that, on the contrary, it should be asserted that the pope could, by a single nod, change or suppress articles of faith; and so he ran on, in a similar strain. But the wily Italian soon perceived that he was forgetting himself; and returning to his mild language, he endeavoured to persuade Luther to submit to the legate in all things, and to retract his doctrine, his oaths, and his theses.

The doctor, who was at first disposed to credit the fair professions of the orator Urban (as he calls him in his narrative), was now convinced that they were of little worth, and that he was much more on the legate's side than on his. He consequently became less communicative, and was content to say, that he was disposed to show all humility, to give proofs of his obedience, and render satisfaction in those things in which he might have erred. At these words Serra Longa exclaimed joyfully: "I shall hasten to the legate; you will follow me presently. Everything will go well, and all will soon be settled."

He went away. The Saxon monk, who had more discernment than the Roman courtier, thought to himself: "This crafty Sinon has been badly taught and trained by his Greeks." Luther was in suspense between hope and fear; yet hope prevailed. The visit and the strange professions of Serra Longa, whom he afterwards called a bungling mediator, revived his courage.

The councillors and other inhabitants of Augsburg, to whom the elector had recommended Luther, were all eager to see the monk whose name already resounded

throughout Germany. Peutinger, the imperial councillor, one of the most eminent patricians of the city, who frequently invited Luther to his table; the councillor Langemantel; Doctor Auerbach of Leipsic; the two brothers of Adelmann, both canons, and many more, repaired to the Augustine convent. They cordially saluted this extraordinary man, who had undertaken so long a journey to place himself in the hands of the Roman agents. "Have you a safe-conduct?" asked they.—"No," replied the intrepid monk. "What boldness!" they all exclaimed.—"It was a polite expression," says Luther, "to designate my rashness and folly." All unanimously entreated him not to visit the legate before obtaining a safe-conduct from the emperor himself. It is probable the public had already heard something of the pope's brief, of which the legate was the bearer.

"But," replied Luther, "I set out for Augsburg without a safe-conduct, and have arrived safely."

"The elector has recommended you to us; you ought therefore to obey us, and do all that we tell you," answered Langemantel affectionately but firmly.

Doctor Auerbach coincided with these views, and added: "We know that at the bottom of his heart the cardinal is exceedingly irritated against you. One cannot trust these Italians."

The canon Adelmann urged the same thing: "You have been sent without protection, and they have forgotten to provide you with that which you needed most." His friends undertook to obtain the requisite safe-conduct from the emperor. They then told Luther how many persons, even in elevated rank, had a leaning in his favour. "The minister of France himself, who left Augsburg a few days ago, has spoken of you in the most honourable manner." This remark struck Luther, and he remembered it afterwards. Thus several of the most respectable citizens in one of the first cities of the Empire were already gained over to the Reformation.

The conversation had reached this point when Serra Longa returned. "Come," said he to Luther, "the cardinal is waiting for you. I will myself conduct you to him. But you must first learn how to appear in his presence: when you enter the room in which he is, you will prostrate yourself with your face to the ground; when he tells you to rise, you will kneel before him; and you will wait his further orders before you stand up. Remember you are about to appear before a prince of the Church. As for the rest, fear nothing: all will speedily be settled without difficulty."

Luther, who had promised to follow this Italian as soon as he was invited, found himself in a dilemma. However, he did not hesitate to inform him of the advice of his Augsburg friends, and spoke of a safe-conduct.

"Beware of asking for anything of the kind," immediately replied Serra Longa; "you do not require one. The legate is kindly disposed towards you, and ready to end this business in a friendly manner. If you ask for a safe-conduct, you will ruin everything."

"My gracious lord, the Elector of Saxony," replied Luther, "recommended me to several honourable men in this city. They advise me to undertake nothing without a safe-conduct: I ought to follow their advice. For if I did not, and anything should happen, they will write to the elector, my master, that I would not listen to them."

Luther persisted in his determination, and Serra Longa was compelled to return to his chief, and announce the shoal on which his mission had struck, at the very moment he flattered himself with success.

Thus terminated the conferences of that day with the orator of Montferrat. Another invitation was sent to Luther, but with a very different view. John Frosch, prior of the Carmelites, was an old friend. Two years before, as licentiate in theology, he had defended some theses, under the presidence of Luther. He came to see him, and begged him earnestly to come and stay with him. He claimed the honour of entertaining the doctor of Germany as his guest. Already men did not fear to pay him homage even in the face of Rome; already the weak had become stronger. Luther accepted the invitation, and left the convent of the Augustines for that of the Carmelites.

The day did not close without serious reflections. Serra Longa's eagerness and the fears of the councillors alike pointed out the difficulties of Luther's position. Nevertheless, he had God in heaven for his protector; guarded by Him he could sleep without fear.

The next day was Sunday, on which he obtained a little more repose. Yet he had to endure fatigues of another kind. All the talk of the city was about Doctor Luther, and everybody desired to see, as he wrote to Melancthon, "this new Erostratus, who had caused so vast a conflagration." They crowded round him in his walks, and the good doctor smiled, no doubt, at this singular excitement.

But he had to undergo importunities of another kind. If the people were desirous of seeing him, they had a still greater wish to hear him. He was requested on all sides to preach. Luther had no greater joy than to proclaim the Gospel. It would have delighted him to preach Jesus Christ in this large city, and in the solemn circumstances in which he was placed. But he evinced on this occasion, as on many others, a just sentiment of propriety, and great respect for his superiors. He refused to preach, for fear the legate should think he did it to annoy and to brave him. This moderation and this discretion were assuredly as good as a sermon.

The cardinal's people, however, did not permit him to remain quiet. They renewed their persuasions. "The cardinal," said they, "gives you assurances of his grace and favour: what are you afraid of?" They employed a thousand reasons to persuade him to wait upon De Vi. "He is a very merciful father," said one of these envoys.

But another approached and whispered in his ear: "Do not believe what they tell you. He never keeps his word." Luther persisted in his resolution.

On Monday morning (10th October), Serra Longa again returned to the charge. The courtier had made it a point of honour to succeed in his negotiation. He had scarcely arrived when he said in Latin:

"Why do you not wait upon the cardinal? He is expecting you most indulgently: the whole matter lies in six letters: Revoca, retract. Come! you have nothing to fear."

Luther thought to himself that these six letters were very important ones; but without entering into any discussion on the merits of the things to be retracted, he replied: "I will appear as soon as I have safe-conduct."

Serra Longa lost his temper on hearing these words. He insisted—he made fresh representations; but Luther was immovable. Becoming still more angry, he exclaimed: "You imagine, no doubt, that the elector will take up arms in your defence, and for your sake run the risk of losing the territories he received from his forefathers?"

Luther.—"God forbid!"

Serra Longa.—"When all forsake you, where will you take refuge?"

Luther, looking to heaven with an eye of faith, "Under heaven." Serra Longa was silent for a moment, struck with the sublimity of this unexpected answer. He then

resumed the conversation: "What would you do if you held the legate, pope, and cardinals in your hands, as they have you now in theirs?"

Luther.—"I would show them all possible honour and respect. But with me, the Word of God is before everything."

Serra Longa, smiling, and snapping his fingers in the manner of the Italians: "Eh, eh! all honour! I do not believe a word of it."

He then went out, sprung into his saddle, and disappeared. Serra Longa did not return to Luther; but he long remembered the resistance he had met with from the reformer, and that which his master was soon after to experience in person. We shall find him at a later period loudly calling for Luther's blood.

Serra Longa had not long quitted the doctor when the safe-conduct arrived. Luther's friends had obtained it from the imperial councillors. It is probable that the latter had consulted the emperor on the subject, as he was not far from Augsburg. It would even appear from what the cardinal said afterwards, that from unwillingness to displease him, his consent also had been asked. Perhaps this was the reason why Serra Longa was set to work upon Luther; for open opposition to the security of a safe-conduct would have disclosed intentions that it was desirable to keep secret. It was a safer plan to induce Luther himself to desist from the demand. But they soon found out that the Saxon monk was not a man to give way.

Luther was now to appear. In demanding a safe-conduct, he did not lean upon an arm of flesh; for he was fully aware that an imperial safe-conduct had not preserved John Huss from the stake. He only wished to do his duty by submitting to the advice of his master's friends. The Lord will decide his faith. If God should require his life he is ready joyfully to resign it. At this solemn moment he felt the need of communing once again with his friends, above all with Melancthon, who was so dear to his heart, and he took advantage of a few moments of leisure to write to him.

"Show yourself a man," said he, "as you do at all times. Teach our beloved youths what is upright and acceptable to God. As for me, I am going to be sacrificed for you and for them, if such is the Lord's will. I would rather die, and even (which would be my greatest misfortune) be for ever deprived of your sweet society, than retract what I felt in my duty to teach, and thus ruin perhaps by my own fault the excellent studies to which we are now devoting ourselves.

"Italy, like Egypt in times of old, is plunged in darkness so thick that it may be felt. No one in that country knows anything of Christ, or of what belongs to him; and yet they are our lords and our masters in faith and in morals. Thus the wrath of God is fulfilled among us, as the prophet saith: I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. Do your duty to God, my dear Philip, and avert his anger by pure and fervent prayer."

The legate, being informed that Luther would appear before him on the morrow, assembled the Italians and Germans in whom he had the greatest confidence, in order to concert with them the method he should pursue with the Saxon monk. Their opinions were divided. We must compel him to retract, said one; we must seize him and put him in prison, said another; it would be better to put him out of the way, thought a third; they should try to win him over by gentleness and mildness, was the opinion of a fourth. The cardinal seems to have resolved on beginning with the last method.

CHAPTER 6

First Appearance—First Words—Conditions of Rome—Propositions to be retracted—Luther's Answer—He withdraws—Impression on both Parties—Arrival of Staupitz

The day fixed for the interview arrived at last. The legate knowing that Luther had declared himself willing to retract everything that could be proved contrary to the truth, was full of hope; he doubted not that it would be easy for a man of his rank and learning to reclaim this monk to obedience to the Church.

Luther repaired to the legate's residence, accompanied by the prior of the Carmelites, his host and his friend; by two friars of the same convent; by Doctor Link and an Augustine, probably the one that had come from Nuremberg with him. He had scarcely entered the legate's palace, when all the Italians who formed the train of this price of the Church crowded round him; everyone desired to see the famous doctor, and they thronged him so much that he could with difficulty proceed. Luther found the apostolic nuncio and Serra Longa in the hall where the cardinal was waiting for him. His reception was cold, but civil, and conformable with Roman etiquette. Luther, in accordance with the advice he had received from Serra Longa, prostrated himself before the cardinal; when the latter told him to rise, he remained on his knees; and at a fresh order from the legate, he stood up. Many of the most distinguished Italians in the legate's court found their way into the hall in order to be present during the interview; they particularly desired to see the German monk humble himself before the pope's representative.

The legate remained silent. He hated Luther as an adversary of the theological supremacy of St. Thomas, and as the chief of a new, active, and hostile party in a rising university, whose first steps had disquieted the Thomists. He was pleased at seeing Luther fall down before him, and thought, as a contemporary observes, that he was about to recant. The doctor on his part humbly waited for the prince to address him; but as he did not speak, Luther understood this silence as an invitation to begin, and he did so in these words:

"Most worthy Father, in obedience to the summons of his papal holiness, and in compliance with the orders of my gracious lord the Elector of Saxony, I appear before you as a submissive and dutiful son of the holy Christian Church, and acknowledge that I have published the propositions and theses ascribed to me. I am ready to listen most obediently to my accusation, and if I have erred, to submit to instruction in the truth."

The cardinal, who had determined to assume the appearance of a tender and compassionate father towards an erring child, then adopted the most friendly tone; he praised and expressed his delight at Luther's humility, and said to him: "My dear son, you have disturbed all Germany by your dispute on indulgences. I understand that you are a very learned doctor in the Holy Scriptures, and that you have many followers. For this reason, if you desire to be a member of the Church, and to find a gracious father in the pope, listen to me."

After this prelude, the legate did not hesitate to declare at once what he expected of him, so confident was he of Luther's submission. "Here are three articles," said he, "which by the command of our holy Father, Pope Leo X, I have to set before you. First, You must bethink yourself, own your faults, and retract your errors, propositions, and sermons; secondly, You must promise to abstain in future from propagating your opinions; and, thirdly, Bind yourself to behave with greater moderation, and avoid everything that may grieve or disturb the Church."

Luther.—"Most holy Father, I beg you will show me the pope's brief, by virtue of which you have received full powers to treat of this matter."

Serra Longa and the other Italians opened their eyes with astonishment at this demand, and although the German monk had already appeared to them a very strange kind of man, they could not conceal their amazement at such a daring request. Christians, accustomed to ideas of justice, desire that justice should be observed towards others and towards themselves; but those who act habitually in an arbitrary manner, are surprised when they are called upon to proceed according to the usual rules, formalities, and laws.

De Vio.—"This request, my dear son, cannot be granted. You must confess your errors, keep a strict watch upon your words for the future, and not return like a dog to his vomit, so that we may sleep without anxiety or disturbance; then, in accordance with the order and authorisation of our most holy Father the Pope, I will arrange the whole business."

Luther.—"Condescend, then, to inform me in what I have erred." At this new request, the Italian courtiers, who had expected to see the poor German fall down on his knees and beg pardon, were still more astonished than before. None of them would have deigned to reply to so impertinent a question. But De Vio, who thought it ungenerous to crush this petty monk with the weight of his authority, and who, besides, trusted to gain an easy victory by his learning, consented to tell Luther of what he was accused, and even to enter into discussion with him. We must do justice

to the general of the Dominicans. We must acknowledge that he showed more equity, a greater sense of propriety, and less passion, than have been often shown in similar matters since. He replied in a condescending tone: "Most dear son! here are two propositions that you have advanced, and which you must retract before all: 1st, The treasure of indulgences does not consist of the sufferings and merits of our Lord Jesus Christ; 2nd, The man who receives the holy sacrament must have faith in the grace that is presented to him."

Each of these propositions, in truth, struck a mortal blow at the Romish commerce. If the pope had not the power of dispensing at his pleasure the merits of the Saviour; if, in receiving the drafts which the brokers of the Church negotiated, men did not receive a portion of this infinite righteousness, this papermoney would lose its value, and would be as worthless as a heap of rags. It was the same with the sacraments. Indulgences were more or less an extraordinary branch of Roman commerce; the sacraments were a staple commodity. The revenue they produced was of no small amount. To assert that faith was necessary before they could confer a real benefit on the soul of a Christian, took away all their charms in the eyes of the people; for it is not the pope who gives faith: it is beyond his province; it proceeds from God alone. To declare its necessity was therefore depriving Rome both of the speculation and the profit. By attacking these two doctrines, Luther had imitated Jesus Christ, who at the very beginning of his ministry had overthrown the tables of the moneychangers, and driven the dealers out of the temple. Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise, he had said.

"In confuting your errors," said Cajetan, "I will not appeal to the authority of St. Thomas and other doctors of the schools; I will rely entirely on Holy Scripture, and talk with you in all friendliness." But De Vio had scarcely begun to bring forward his proofs before he departed from the rule he had declared that he would follow. He combated Luther's first proposition by an Extravagance of Pope Clement, and the second by all sorts of opinions from the schoolmen. The discussion turned first on this papal constitution in favour of indulgences. Luther, indignant at hearing what authority the legate ascribed to a decree of Rome, exclaimed:—

"I cannot receive such constitutions as sufficient proofs on matters so important. For they pervert the Holy Scriptures, and never quote them to the purpose."

De Vio.—"The pope has power and authority over all things." Luther, quickly.—"Except Scripture!"

De Vio, sneering.—"Except Scripture! Do you not know that the pope is above councils; he has recently condemned and punished the Council of Basle."

Luther.—"The university of Paris has appealed from this sentence."

De Vio.—"These Paris gentlemen will receive their deserts." The dispute between the cardinal and Luther then turned upon the second point, namely, the faith that Luther declared necessary for the efficacy of the sacraments. Luther, accordingly to his custom, quoted various passages of Scripture in favour of the opinion he maintained; but the legate treated them with ridicule. "It is of faith in general that you are speaking," said he.—"No," replied Luther.— One of the Italians, the legate's master of the ceremonies, irritated at Luther's resistance and replies, was burning with the desire to speak. He continually endeavoured to put in a word, but the legate imposed silence on him. At last he was compelled to reprimand him so sharply, that the master of the ceremonies quitted the hall in confusion.

"As for indulgences," said Luther to the legate, "if it can be shown that I am mistaken, I am very ready to receive instruction.

We may pass over that and yet be good Christians. But as to the article of faith, if I made the slightest concession, I should renounce Jesus Christ. I cannot—I will not yield on this point, and with God's grace I will never yield."

De Vio, growing angry.—"Whether you will, or whether you will not, you must retract that article this very day, or, upon that article alone, I shall reject and condemn your whole doctrine."

Luther.—"I have no will but the Lord's. Let him do with me as seemeth good to him. But if I had four hundred heads, I would rather lose them all than retract the testimony which I have borne to the holy Christian faith."

De Vio.—"I did not come here to dispute with you. Retract, or prepare to suffer the penalty you have deserved." Luther saw clearly that it was impossible to put an end to the subject by a conference. His opponent sat before him as if he were himself pope, and pretended that he would receive humbly and submissively all that was said to him; and yet he listened to Luther's replies, even when they were founded on Holy Scripture, with shrugging of shoulders, and every mark of irony and contempt. He thought the wise plan would be to answer the cardinal in writing. This means, thought he, gives at least one consolation to the oppressed. Others will be able to

judge of the matter, and the unjust adversary, who by his clamours remains master of the field of battle, may be frightened at the consequences.

Luther having shown a disposition to retire, the legate said, "Do you wish me to give you a safe-conduct to go to Rome?"

Nothing would have pleased Cajetan better than the acceptance of this offer. He would thus have been freed from a task of which he now began to perceive the difficulties; and Luther, with his heresy, would have fallen into hands that would soon have arranged everything. But the reformer, who saw the dangers that surrounded him, even in Augsburg, took care not to accept an offer that would have delivered him up, bound hand and foot, to the vengeance of his enemies. He therefore rejected it, as often as De Vio proposed it; and he did so very frequently. The legate dissembled his vexation at Luther's refusal; he took refuge in his dignity, and dismissed the monk with a compassionate smile, under which he endeavoured to conceal his disappointment, and at the same time with the politeness of a man who hopes for better success another time.

Luther had scarcely reached the court of the palace before that babbling Italian, the master of the ceremonies, whom his lord's reprimands had compelled to quit the hall of conference, overjoyed at being able to speak without being observed by Cajetan, and burning with desire to confound the abominable heretic with his luminous reasonings, ran after him, and began, as he walked along, to deal out his sophisms. But Luther, disgusted with this foolish individual, replied to him by one of those sarcasms which he had so much at command, and the poor master slunk away abashed, and returned in confusion to the cardinal's palace.

Luther did not carry away a very exalted opinion of his adversary. He had heard from him, as he wrote afterwards to Spalatin, propositions quite opposed to sound theology, and which in the mouth of another would have been considered archheresies. And yet De Vio was reckoned the most learned of the Dominicans. Next after him was Prierio. "We may conclude from this," says Luther, "what they must be who are in the tenth or the hundredth rank."

On the other hand, the noble and decided bearing of the Wittenberg doctor had greatly surprised the cardinal and his courtiers. Instead of a poor monk asking pardon as a favour, they had found a man of independence, a firm Christian, an enlightened doctor, who required that unjust accusations should be supported by proofs, and who victoriously defended his own doctrine. Everyone in Cajetan's palace cried out against the pride, obstinacy, and effrontery of the heretic. Luther and De Vio had learned to know each other, and both prepared for their second interview.

A very agreeable surprise awaited Luther on his return to the Carmelite convent. The vicar-general of the Augustine order, his friend and father, Staupitz, had arrived at Augsburg. Unable to prevent Luther's journey to that city, Staupitz gave his friend a new and touching proof of his attachment by going thither himself in the hope of being useful to him. This excellent man foresaw that the conference with the legate might have the most serious consequences. He was equally agitated by his fears and by his friendship for Luther. After so painful an interview, it was a great comfort to the doctor to embrace so dear a friend. He told him how impossible it had been to obtain an answer of any value, and how the cardinal had insisted solely upon a recantation, without having essayed to convince him. "You must positively," said Staupitz, "reply to the legate in writing."

After what he had learnt of the first interview, Staupitz entertained but little hopes from another. He therefore resolved upon an act which he now thought necessary; he determined to release Luther from the obligations of his order. By this means Staupitz thought to attain two objects: if, as everything seemed to forebode, Luther should fail in this undertaking, he would thus prevent the disgrace of his condemnation from being reflected on the whole order; and if the cardinal should order him to force Luther to be silent or to retract, he would have an excuse for not doing so. The ceremony was performed with the usual formalities. Luther saw clearly what he must now expect. His soul was deeply moved at the breaking of those bonds which he had taken upon him in the enthusiasm of youth. The order he had chosen rejects him; his natural protectors forsake him. He is already become a stranger among his brethren. But although his heart was filled with sadness at the thought, all his joy returned when he directed his eyes to the promises of a faithful God, who has said: I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.

The emperor's councillors having informed the legate, through the Bishop of Trent, that Luther was provided with an imperial safe-conduct, and having at the same time enjoined him to take no proceedings against the doctor, De Vio lost his temper, and abruptly answered in this truly Romish language: "It is well; but I will execute the pope's orders." We know what they were.

CHAPTER 7

Second Interview—Luther's Declaration—The Legate's Answer—His Volubility—Luther's Request

The next day both parties prepared for a second interview, which it seemed would be decisive. Luther's friends, who were resolved to accompany him to the legate's palace, went to the Carmelite convent. Peutinger and the Dean of Trent, both imperial councillors, and Staupitz, arrived successively. Shortly after, the doctor had the pleasure of seeing them joined by the knight Philip of Feilitzsch and Doctor Ruhel, councillors of the elector, who had received their master's order to be present at the conferences, and to protect Luther's liberty. They had reached Augsburg the previous evening.

They were to keep close to him, says Mathesius, as the knight of Chlum stood by John Huss at Constance. The doctor moreover took a notary, and, accompanied by all his friends, he repaired to the legate's palace.

At this moment Staupitz approached him: he fully comprehended Luther's position; he knew that unless his eyes were fixed on the Lord, who is the deliverer of his people, he must fall. "My dear brother," said he, seriously, "bear constantly in mind that you have begun these things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." Thus did God environ his humble servant with consolation an encouragement.

When Luther arrived at the cardinal's, he found a new adversary: this was the prior of the Dominicans of Augsburg, who sat beside his chief. Luther, conformably with the resolution he had taken, had written his answer. The customary salutations being finished, he read the following declaration with a loud voice:—

"I declare that I honour the holy Roman Church, and that I shall continue to honour her. I have sought after truth in my public disputations, and everything that I have said I still consider as right, true, and christian. Yet I am but a man, and may be deceived. I am therefore willing to receive instruction and correction in those things wherein I may have erred. I declare myself ready to reply orally or in writing to all the objections and charges that the lord legate may bring against me. I declare myself ready to submit my theses to the four universities of Basle, Friburg in Brisgau, Louvain, and Paris, and to retract whatever they shall declare erroneous. In a word, I am ready to do all that can be required of a Christian. But I solemnly protest against the method that has been pursued in this affair, and against the strange pretension of compelling me to retract without having refuted me."

Undoubtedly nothing could be more reasonable than these propositions of Luther's, and they must have greatly embarrassed a judge who had been tutored beforehand as to the judgment he should pronounce. The legate, who had not expected this protest, endeavoured to hide his confusion by affecting to smile at it, and by assuming an appearance of mildness. "This protest," said he to Luther, with a smile, "is unnecessary; I have no desire to dispute with you either privately or publicly; but I propose arranging this matter with the kindness of a parent." The sum of the cardinal's policy consisted in laying aside the stricter forms of justice, which protect the accused, and treating the whole affair as one of mere administration between a superior and an inferior: a convenient method, that opens a wider field for arbitrary proceedings.

Continuing with the most affectionate air, De Vio said: "My dear friend, abandon, I beseech you, so useless an undertaking; bethink yourself, acknowledge the truth, and I am prepared to reconcile you with the Church and the sovereign bishop Retract, my friend, retract; such is the pope's wish. Whether you will or whether you will not, is of little consequence. It would be a hard matter for you to kick against the pricks."

Luther, who saw himself treated as if he were already a rebellious child and an outcast from the Church, exclaimed "I cannot retract! but I offer to reply, and that too in writing. We had debating enough yesterday."

De Vio was irritated at this expression, which reminded him that he had not acted with sufficient prudence; but he recovered himself, and said with a smile: "Debated! my dear son, I have not debated with you: besides, I have no wish to debate; but, to please the most serene Elector Frederick, I am ready to listen to you, and to exhort you in a friendly and paternal manner."

Luther could not understand why the legate was so much scandalised at the term he employed; for (thought he), if I had not wished to speak with politeness, I ought to have said, not debated, but disputed and wrangled, for that is what we really did yesterday.

De Vio, who felt that in the presence of the respectable witnesses who attended this conference, he must at least appear anxious to convince Luther, reverted to the two propositions, which he had pointed out as fundamental errors, being firmly resolved to permit the reformer to speak as little as possible. Availing himself of his Italian volubility, he overwhelmed the doctor with objections, without waiting for any reply. At one time he jeered, at another scolded; he declaimed with passionate

warmth; mingled together the most heterogeneous matters; quoted St. Thomas and Aristotle; clamoured, stormed against all who thought differently from himself; and apostrophized Luther. More than ten times did the latter try to speak; but the legate immediately interrupted him and overwhelmed him with threats. Retract! retract! this was all that was required of him. He raved, he domineered, he alone was permitted to speak. Staupitz took upon himself to check the legate. "Pray, allow brother Martin time to reply to you," said he. But De Vio began again; he quoted the Extravagances and the opinions of St. Thomas; he had resolved to have all the talk to himself during this interview. If he could not convince, and if he dared not strike, he would do his best to stun by his violence.

Luther and Staupitz saw very clearly that they must renounce all hope, not only of enlightening De Vio by discussion, but still more of making any useful confession of faith. Luther therefore reverted to the request he had made at the beginning of the sitting, and which the cardinal had then eluded. Since he was not permitted to speak, he begged that he might at least be permitted to transmit a written reply to the legate. Staupitz seconded this petition; several of the spectators joined their entreaties to his, and Cajetan, notwithstanding his repugnance to everything that was written, for he remembered that such writings are lasting (scripta manent) at length consented. The meeting broke up. The hopes that had been entertained of seeing the matter arranged at this interview were deferred; they must wait and see the issue of the next conference.

The permission which the general of the Dominicans had given Luther to take time for his reply, and to write his answer, to the two distinct accusations touching indulgences and faith, was no more than strict justice required, and yet we must give De Vio credit for this mark of moderation and impartiality.

Luther quitted the cardinal, delighted that his request had been granted. On his way to Cajetan, and on his return, he was the object of public attention. All enlightened men were as much interested in his affair as if they were to be tried themselves. It was felt that the cause of the Gospel, of justice, and of liberty, was then pleading at Augsburg. The lower classes alone held with Cajetan, and they no doubt gave the Reformer some significant proofs of their sentiments, for he took notice of them.

It became more evident every day that the legate would hear no other words from Luther that these: "I retract," and Luther was resolved not to pronounce them. What will be the issue of so unequal a struggle? How can it be imagined that all the power of Rome matched against a single man should fail to crush him? Luther sees this; he

feels the weight of that terrible hand under which he has voluntarily placed himself; he loses all hope of returning to Wittenberg, of seeing his dear Philip again, of mingling once more with those generous youths in whose hearts he so delighted to scatter the seeds of life. He beholds the sentence of excommunication suspended over his head, and doubts not that it will soon fall upon him. These prospects afflict his soul, but he is not cast down. His trust in God is not shaken. God can break the instrument he has been pleased to make use of until this hour; but he will uphold the truth. Happen what may, Luther must defend it to the last. He therefore begins to prepare the protest that he intends presenting to the legate. It would appear that he devoted part of the 13th October to this task.

CHAPTER 8

Third Interview—Treasure of Indulgences—Faith—Humble Petition—Legate's Reply—Luther's Answer—The Legate's Anger—Luther withdraws—First Defection

On Friday (14th October), Luther returned to the cardinal, accompanied by the elector's councillors. The Italians crowded around him as usual, and were present at the conference in great numbers. Luther advanced and presented his protest to the cardinal. His courtiers regarded this paper with astonishment—a paper so presumptuous in their eyes. This is what the Wittenberg doctor declared to their master:—

"You attack me on two points. First, you oppose to me the constitution of Pope Clement VI, in which it is said that the treasure of indulgences is the merit of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the saints— which I deny in my theses.

"Panormitanus declares in his first book, that in whatever concerns the holy faith, not only a general council, but still further, each believer, is above the pope, if he can bring forward the declarations of Scripture and allege better reasons than the pope. The voice of our Lord Jesus Christ is far above the voice of all men, whatever be the names they bear.

"My greatest cause of grief and of serious reflection is, that this constitution contains doctrines entirely at variance with the truth. It declares that the merits of the saints are a treasure, while the whole of Scripture bears witness that God rewards us far more richly than we deserve. The prophet exclaims: Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified! 'Woe be to men, however honourable and however praiseworthy their lives may have been,' says Augustine, 'if a judgment from which mercy was excluded should be pronounced upon them!'

"Thus the saints are not saved by their merits, but solely by God's mercy, as I have declared. I maintain this, and in it I stand fast. The words of Holy Scripture, which declare that the saints have not merit enough, must be set above the words of men, which affirm that they have an excess. For the pope is not above the words of men, which affirm that they have an excess. For the pope is not above the Word of God, but below it."

Luther does not stop here: he shows that if indulgences cannot be the merits of the saints, they cannot any the more be the merits of Christ. He proves that

indulgences are barren and fruitless, since their only effect is to exempt men from performing good works, such as prayer and almsgiving. "No," exclaims he, "the merits of Jesus Christ are not a treasure of indulgence exempting man from good works, but a treasure of grace which quickeneth. The merits of Christ are applied to the believer without indulgences, without the keys, by the Holy Ghost alone, and not by the pope. If anyone has an opinion better founded than mine," adds he, terminating what referred to this first point, "let him make it known to me, and then will I retract."

"I affirm," said he, coming to the second article, "that no man can be justified before God if he has not faith; so that it is necessary for a man to believe with a perfect assurance that he has obtained grace. To doubt of this grace is to reject it. The faith of the righteous is his righteousness and his life."

Luther proves his proposition by a multitude of declarations from Scripture.

"Condescend, therefore, to intercede for me with our most holy father the pope," adds he, "in order that he may not treat me with such harshness. My soul is seeking for the light of truth. I am not so proud or so vainglorious as to be ashamed of retracting if I have taught false doctrines. My greatest joy will be to witness the triumph of what is according to God's Word. Only let not men force me to do anything that is against the voice of my conscience."

The legate took the declaration from Luther's hands. After glancing over it, he said coldly: "You have indulged in useless verbiage; you have penned many idle words; you have replied in a foolish manner to the two articles, and have blackened your paper with a great number of passages from Scripture that have no connection with the subject." Then, with an air of contempt, De Vio flung Luther's protest aside, as if it were of no value, and recommencing in the tone which had been so successful in the previous interview, he began to exclaim with all his might that Luther ought to retract. The latter was immovable. "Brother! brother!" then cried De Vio in Italian, "on the last occasion you were very tractable, but now you are very obstinate." The cardinal then began a long speech, extracted from the writings of St. Thomas; he again extolled the constitution of Clement VI; and persisted in maintaining that by virtue of this constitution it is the very merits of Jesus Christ that are dispensed to the believer by means of indulgences. He thought he had reduced Luther to silence: the latter sometimes interrupted him; but De Vio raved and stormed without intermission, and claimed, as on the previous day, the sole right of speaking.

This method had partially succeeded the first time; but Luther was not a man to submit to it on a second occasion. His indignation bursts out at last; it is his turn to

astonish the spectators, who believe him already conquered by the prelate's volubility. He raises his sonorous voice, seizes upon the cardinal's favourite objection, and makes him pay dearly for his rashness in venturing to enter into discussion with him. "Retract, retract!" repeated De Vio, pointing to the papal constitution. "Well, if it can be proved by this constitution," said Luther, "that the treasure of indulgences is the very merits of Jesus Christ, I consent to retract, according to your Eminence's goodwill and pleasure."

The Italians, who had expected nothing of the kind, opened their eyes in astonishment at these words, and could not contain their joy at seeing their adversary caught in the net. As for the cardinal, he was beside himself; he laughed aloud, but with a laugh in which anger and indignation were mingled; he sprang forward, seized the book which contained this famous constitution; looked for it, found it, and exulting in the victory he thought certain, read the passage aloud with panting eagerness. The Italians were elated; the elector's councillors were uneasy and embarrassed; Luther was waiting for his adversary. At last, when the cardinal came to these words: "The Lord Jesus Christ has acquired this treasure by his sufferings," Luther stopped him: "Most worthy father," said he, "pray, meditate and weigh these words carefully: He has acquired. Christ has acquired a treasure by his merits; the merits, therefore, are not the treasure; for, to speak philosophically, the cause and effect are very different matters. The merits of Jesus Christ have acquired for the pope the power of giving certain indulgences to the people; but it is not the very merits of our Lord that the hand of the pontiff distributes. Thus, then, my conclusion is the true one, and this constitution, which you invoke with so much noise, testifies with me to the truth I proclaim."

De Vio still held the book in his hands, his eyes resting on the fatal passage; he could make no reply. He was caught in the very snare he had laid, and Luther held him there with a strong hand, to the inexpressible astonishment of the Italian courtiers around him. The legate would have eluded the difficulty, but had not the means: he had long abandoned the testimony of Scripture and of the Fathers; he had taken refuge in this Extravagance of Clement VI, and lo! he was caught. Yet he was too cunning to betray his confusion. Desirous of concealing his disgrace, the prince of the Church suddenly quitted this subject, and violently attacked other articles. Luther, who perceived this skilful manoeuvre, did not permit him to escape; he tightened and closed on every side the net in which he had taken the cardinal, and rendered all escape impossible. "Most reverend Father," said he, with an ironical, yet very respectful tone, "your eminence cannot, however, imagine that we Germans are ignorant of grammar: to be a treasure, and to acquire a treasure, are two very different things."

"Retract!" said De Vio; "retract! or if you do not, I shall send you to Rome to appear before judges commissioned to take cognizance of your affair. I shall excommunicate you with all your partisans, with all who are or who may be favourable to you, and reject them from the Church. All power has been given me in this respect by the holy apostolic see. Think you that your protectors will stop me? Do you imagine that the pope cares anything for Germany? The pope's little finger is stronger than all the German princes put together."

"Deign," replies Luther, "to forward to Pope Leo X, with my humble prayers, the answer which I have transmitted you in writing." At these words, the legate, highly pleased at finding a moment's release, again assumed an air of dignity, and said to Luther with pride and anger:

"Retract, or return no more."

These words struck Luther. This time he will reply in another way than by speeches: he bowed and left the hall, followed by the elector's councillors. The cardinal and the Italians, remaining alone, looked at one another in confusion at such a result.

Thus the Dominican system, covered with the brilliancy of the Roman purple, had haughtily dismissed its humble adversary. But Luther was conscious that there was a power—the Christian doctrine, the truth—that no secular or spiritual authority could ever subdue. Of the two combatants, he who withdrew remained master of the field of battle.

This is the first step by which the Church separated from the papacy.

Luther and De Vio did not meet again; but the reformer had made a deep impression on the legate, which was never effaced. What Luther had said about faith, what De Vio read in the subsequent writings of the Wittenberg doctor, greatly modified the cardinal's opinions. The theologians of Rome beheld with surprise and discontent the sentiments he advanced on justification in his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. The Reformation did not recede, did not retract; but its judge, he who had not ceased from crying, Retract! retract! changed his views, and indirectly retracted his errors. Thus was crowned the unshaken fidelity of the Reformer.

Luther returned to the monastery where he had been entertained. He had stood fast; he had given testimony to the truth; he had done his duty. God will perform the rest! His heart overflowed with peace and joy.

CHAPTER 9

De Vio and Staupitz—Staupitz and Luther—Luther to Spalatin—Luther to Carlstadt—The Communion—Link and De Vio—Departure of Link and Staupitz—Luther to Cajetan—Cardinal's Silence—Luther's Farewell—Departure—Appeal to Rome

Yet the rumours that reached him were not very encouraging: it was reported in the city, that if he did not retract, he was to be seized and thrown into a dungeon. The vicar-general of his order, Staupitz himself, it was affirmed, had given his consent. Luther cannot believe what is said of his friend. No! Staupitz will not deceive him! As for the cardinal's designs, to judge from his words, there could be no doubt about them. Yet he will not flee from the danger; his life, like the truth itself, is in powerful hands, and, despite the threatening peril, he is resolved not to quit Augsburg.

The legate soon repented of his violence; he felt that he had gone beyond his part, and endeavoured to retrace his steps. Staupitz had scarcely finished his dinner (on the morning of the interview, and the dinner hour was noon), before he received a message from the cardinal, inviting him to his palace. Staupitz went thither attended by Wenceslas Link. The vicar-general found the legate alone with Serra Longa. De Vio immediately approached Staupitz, and addressed him in the mildest language. "Endeavour," said he, "to prevail upon your monk, and induce him to retract. Really, in other respects, I am well pleased with him, and he has no better friend than myself."

Staupitz.—"I have already done so, and I will again advise him to submit to the Church in all humility."

De Vio.—"You will have to reply to the arguments he derives from the Holy Scriptures."

Staupitz.—"I must confess, my lord, that is a task beyond my abilities; for Doctor Martin Luther is superior to me both in genius and knowledge of the Holy Scriptures." The cardinal smiled, no doubt, at the vicar-general's frankness. Besides, he knew himself how difficult it would be to convince Luther. He continued, addressing both Staupitz and Link:—

"Are you aware, that, as partisans of an heretical doctrine, you are yourselves liable to the penalties of the Church?"

Staupitz.—"Condescend to resume the conference with Luther, and order a public discussion on the controverted points."

De Vio, alarmed at the very thought.—"I will no longer dispute with that beast, for it has deep eyes and wonderful speculations in its head."

Staupitz at length prevailed on the cardinal to transmit to Luther in writing what he was required to retract.

The vicar-general returned to Luther. Staggered by the representations of the cardinal, he endeavoured to persuade him to come to an arrangement. "Refute, then," said Luther, "the declarations of Scripture that I have advanced."—"It is beyond my ability," said Staupitz.—"Well then!" replied Luther, "it is against my conscience to retract, so long as these passages of Scripture are not explained differently. What!" continued he, "the cardinal professes, as you inform me, that he is desirous of arranging this affair without any disgrace or detriment to me! Ah! these are Roman expressions, which signify in good German that it will be my eternal shame and ruin. What else can he expect who, through fear of men and against the voice of his conscience, denies the truth?"

Staupitz did not persist; he only informed Luther that the cardinal had consented to transmit to him in writing the points which he would be required to retract. He then no doubt informed him also of his intention of quitting Augsburg, where he had no longer anything to do. Luther communicated to him a plan he had formed for comforting and strengthening their souls. Staupitz promised to return, and they separated for a short time.

Alone in his cell, Luther turned his thoughts towards the friends dearest to his heart. His ideas wandered to Weimar and to Wittenberg. He desired to inform the elector of what was passing; and, fearful of being indiscreet by addressing the prince himself, he wrote to Spalatin, and begged the chaplain to inform his master of the state of affairs. He detailed the whole transaction, even to the promise given by the legate to send him the controverted points in writing, and finished by saying: "This is the posture of affairs; but I have neither hope nor confidence in the legate. I will not retract a syllable. I will publish the reply I gave him, in order that, if he should proceed to violence he may be covered with shame in all Christendom."

The doctor then profited by the few moments that still remained to write to his Wittenberg friends.

"Peace and happiness," wrote he to Doctor Carlstadt. "Accept these few words as if they were a long letter, for time and events are pressing. At a better opportunity I will write to you and others more fully. Three days my business has been in hand, and matters are now at such a point that I have no longer any hope of returning to you, and I have nothing to look for but excommunication. The legate positively will not allow me to dispute either publicly or privately. He desires not to be a judge," says he, "but a father to me; and yet he will hear no other words from me than these: 'I retract, and acknowledge my error.' And these I will not utter.

"The dangers of my cause are so much the greater that its judges are not only implacable enemies, but, still further, men incapable of understanding it. Yet the Lord God lives and reigns: to his protection I commit myself, and I doubt not that, in answer to the prayers of a few pious souls, he will send me deliverance; I imagine I feel them praying for me.

"Either I shall return to you without having suffered any harm; or else, struck with excommunication, I shall have to seek a refuge elsewhere.

"However that may be, conduct yourself valiantly, stand fast, and glorify Christ boldly and joyfully/

"The cardinal always styles me his dear son. I know how much I must believe of that. I am nevertheless persuaded that I should be the most acceptable and dearest man to him in the world, if I would pronounce the single word Revoco, I retract. But I will not become a heretic by renouncing the faith by which I became a Christian. I would rather be exiled, accursed, and burnt to death.

"Farewell, my dear doctor; show this letter to our theologians, to Amsdorff, to Philip, to Otten, and the rest, in order that you may pray for me and also for yourselves; for it is your cause that I am pleading here. It is that of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the grace of God."

Sweet thought, which ever fills with consolation and with peace all those who have borne witness to Jesus Christ, to his divinity, to his grace, when the world pours upon them from every side its judgments, its exclusions, and its disgrace: "Our cause is that of faith in the Lord!" And what sweetness also in the conviction expressed by the reformer: "I feel that they are praying for me!" The Reformation was the work of piety and prayer. The struggle between Luther and De Vio was that of a religious element which reappeared full of life with the expiring relics of the wordy dialectics

of the middle ages. Thus did Luther converse with his absent friends. Staupitz soon returned;

Doctor Ruhel and the Knight of Feilitzsch, both envoys from the elector, also called upon Luther after taking leave of the cardinal. Some other friends of the Gospel joined them. Luther, seeing thus assembled these generous men, who were on the point of separating, and from whom he was perhaps to part for ever, proposed that they should celebrate the Lord's Supper together. They agreed, and this little band of faithful men communicated in the body and blood of Jesus Christ. What feelings swelled the hearts of the reformer's friends at the moment when, celebrating the Eucharist with him, they thought it was perhaps the last time they would be permitted to do so! What joy, what love animated Luther's heart, as he beheld himself so graciously accepted by his Master at the very moment that men rejected him! How solemn must have been that communion! How holy that evening!

The next day Luther waited for the articles the legate was to send him; but not receiving any message, he begged his friend Wenceslas Link to go to the cardinal. De Vio received Link in the most affable manner, and assured him that he had no desire but to act like a friend. He said, "I no longer regard Luther as a heretic. I will not excommunicate him this time, unless I receive further orders from Rome. I have sent his reply to the pope by an express." And then, to show his friendly intentions, he added: "If Doctor Luther would only retract what concerns indulgences, the matter would soon be finished; for as to what concerns faith in the sacraments, it is an article that each one may understand and interpret in his own fashion." Spalatin, who records these words, adds this shrewd but just remark: "It follows clearly that Rome looks to money rather than to the holy faith and the salvation of souls."

Link returned to Luther: he found Staupitz with him, and gave them an account of his visit. When he came to the unexpected concession of the legate: "It would have been well," said Staupitz, "if Doctor Wenceslas had had a notary and witnesses with him to take down these words in writing; for, if such a proposal were made known, it would be very prejudicial to the Romans."

However, in proportion to the mildness of the prelate's language, the less confidence did these worthy Germans place in him. Many of the good men to whom Luther had been recommended held counsel together: "The legate," said they, "is preparing some mischief by this courier of whom he speaks, and it is very much to be feared that you will all be seized and thrown into prison."

Staupitz and Wenceslas therefore resolved to quit the city; they embraced Luther, who persisted in remaining at Augsburg, and departed hastily for Nuremberg, by two different roads, not without much anxiety respecting the fate of the courageous witness they were leaving behind them.

Sunday passed off quietly enough. But Luther in vain waited for the legate's message: the latter sent none. At last he determined to write. Staupitz and Link, before setting out, had begged him to treat the cardinal with all possible respect. Luther had not yet made trial of Rome and of her envoys: this is his first experiment. If deference did not succeed, he would take a warning from it. Now at least he must make the attempt. For his own part, not a day passed in which he did not condemn himself, and groan over his facility in giving utterance to expressions stronger than the occasion required: why should he not confess to the cardinal what he confessed daily to God? Besides, Luther's heart was easily moved, and he suspected no evil. He took up his pen, and with a sentiment of the most respectful goodwill, wrote to the cardinal as follows:—

"Most worthy Father in God, once more I approach you, not in person, but by letter, entreating your paternal goodness to listen to me graciously. The reverend Dr. Staupitz, my very dear father in Christ, has called upon me to humble myself, to renounce my own sentiments, and to submit my opinions to the judgment of pious and impartial men. He has also praised your fatherly kindness, and has thoroughly convinced me of your favourable disposition towards me. This news has filled me with joy.

"Now, therefore, most worthy Father, I confess, as I have already done before, that I have not shown (as has been reported) sufficient modesty, meekness, or respect for the name of the sovereign pontiff; and, although I have been greatly provoked, I see that it would have been better for me to have conducted my cause with greater humility, mildness, and reverence, and not to have answered a fool according to his folly, lest I should be like unto him.

"This grieves me very much, and I ask forgiveness. I will publicly confess it to the people from the pulpit, as indeed I have often done before. I will endeavour, by God's grace, to speak differently. Nay more: I am ready to promise, freely and of my own accord, not to utter another word on the subject of indulgences, if this business is arranged. But also, let those who made me begin, be compelled on their part to be more moderate henceforth in their sermons, or to be silent.

"As for the truth of my doctrine, the authority of St. Thomas and other doctors cannot satisfy me. I must hear (if I am worthy to do so) the voice of the bride, which is the Church. For it is certain that she hears the voice of the Bridegroom, which is Christ.

"In all humility and submission, I therefore entreat your paternal love to refer all this business, so unsettled up to this day, to our most holy lord Leo X, in order that the Church may decide, pronounce, and ordain, and that I may retract with a good conscience, or believe with sincerity."

As we read this letter, another reflection occurs to us. We see that Luther was not acting on a preconceived plan, but solely by virtue of convictions impressed successively on his mind and on his heart. Far from having any settled system, any well-arranged opposition, he frequently and unsuspectingly contradicted himself. Old convictions still reigned in his mind, although opposite convictions had already entered it. And yet, it is in these marks of sincerity and truth that men have sought for arguments against the Reformation; it is because it followed the necessary laws of progression which are imposed upon all things in the human mind, that some have written the history of its variations; it is in these very features, that show its sincerity and which consequently make it honourable, that one of the most eminent christian geniuses has found his strongest objections! Inconceivable perversity of the human mind!

Luther received no answer to his letter. Cajetan and his courtiers, after being so violently agitated, had suddenly become motionless. What could be the reason? Might it not be the calm that precedes the storm? Some persons were of Pallavicini's opinion: "The cardinal was waiting," he observes, "until this proud monk, like an inflated bellows, should gradually lose the wind that filled him, and become thoroughly humble." Others, imagining they understood the ways of Rome better, felt sure that the legate intended to arrest Luther, but that, not daring to proceed to such extremities on his own account, because of the imperial safe-conduct, he was waiting a reply from Rome to his message. Others could not believe that the cardinal would delay so long. The Emperor Maximilian, said they (and this may really be the truth), will have no more scruple to deliver Luther over to the judgment of the Church, notwithstanding the safe-conduct, than Sigismond had to surrender Huss to the Council of Constance. The legate is perhaps even now negotiating with the emperor. Maximilian's authorisation may arrive every minute. The more he was opposed to the pope before, the more will he seem to flatter him now, until the imperial crown encircles his grandchild's head. There is not a moment to be lost. "Draw up an appeal

to the pope," said the noble-minded men who surrounded Luther, "and quit Augsburg without delay."

Luther, whose presence in this city had been useless during the last four days and who had sufficiently proved, by his remaining after the departure of the Saxon councillors sent by the elector to watch over his safety, that he feared nothing, and that he was ready to answer any charge, yielded at length to his friends' solicitations. But first he resolved to inform De Vio of his intention: he wrote to him on Tuesday, the eve of his departure. This second letter is in a firmer tone than the other. It would appear that Luther, seeing all his advances were unavailing, began to lift up his head in the consciousness of his integrity and of the injustice of his enemies.

"Most worthy Father in God," wrote he to De Vio, "your paternal kindness has witnessed,—I repeat it, witnessed and sufficiently acknowledged my obedience. I have undertaken a long journey, through great dangers, in great weakness of body, and in spite of my extreme poverty; at the command of our most holy lord, Leo X, I have appeared in person before your eminence; lastly, I have thrown myself at the feet of his holiness, and I now wait his good pleasure, ready to submit to his judgement, whether he should condemn or acquit me. I therefore feel that I have omitted nothing which it becomes an obedient child of the Church to do.

"I think, consequently, that I ought not uselessly to prolong my sojourn in this town; besides, it would be impossible; my resources are failing me; and your paternal goodness has loudly forbidden me to appear before you again, unless I will retract.

"I therefore depart in the name of the Lord, desiring, if possible, to find some spot where I may dwell in peace. Many persons, of greater importance than myself, have requested me to appeal from your paternal kindness, and even from our most holy lord, Leo X, ill informed, to the pope when better informed. Although I know that such an appeal will be far more acceptable to our most serene highness the elector than a retractation, nevertheless, if I had consulted my own feelings only, I should not have done so I have committed no fault; I ought therefore to fear nothing."

Luther having written this letter, which was not given to the legate until after his departure, prepared to quit Augsburg. God had preserved him till this hour, and he praised the Lord for it with all his heart; but he must not tempt God. He embraced his friends Peutinger, Langemantel, the Adelmanns, Auerbach, and the prior of the Carmelites, who had shown him such christian hospitality. On Wednesday, before daybreak, he was up and ready to set out. His friends had recommended him to take every precaution for fear that he should be prevented, if his intentions were known.

He followed their advice as far as possible. A pony, that Staupitz had left for him, was brought to the door of the convent. Once more he bids his brethren adieu; he then mounts and sets off, without a bridle for his horse, without boots or spurs, and unarmed. The magistrate of the city had sent him as a guide one of the horsepolice who was well acquainted with the roads. This servant conducts him in the dark through the silent streets of Augsburg. They direct their course to a small gate in the wall of the city. One of the councillors, Langemantel, had given orders that it should be opened. He is still in power of the legate. The hand of Rome may grasp him yet. No doubt if the Italians knew their prey was escaping them, they would utter a cry of rage. Who can say that the intrepid adversary of Rome will not yet be seized and thrown into a dungeon? At length Luther and his guide arrive at the little gate; they pass through. They are out of Augsburg; and soon they put their horses to a gallop, and ride speedily away.

Luther, on his departure, had left his appeal to the pope in the hands of Pomesaw. His friends had recommended that it should not be transmitted to the legate. The prior was commissioned to have it posted upon the cathedral gates two or three days after the doctor's departure, in the presence of a notary and witnesses. This was done.

In this paper, Luther declares that he appeals from the most holy Father the Pope, ill informed, to the most holy lord and Father in Christ, Leo X of that name, by the grace of God, better informed. This appeal had been drawn up in the customary form and style, by the aid of the imperial notary, Gall of Herbrachtingen, in the presence of two Augustine monks, Bartholomew Utzmair, and Wenzel Steinbies. It was dated the 16th October.

When the cardinal was informed of Luther's departure, he was thunderstruck, and even frightened and alarmed, as he assured his elector in his letter. Indeed there was good cause to be annoyed. This departure, which so abruptly terminated the negotiations, disconcerted the hopes with which he had so long flattered his pride. He had been ambitious of the honour of healing the Church, of restoring the tottering influence of the pope in Germany; and the heretic had escaped not only unpunished, but even without being humbled. The conference had served only to exhibit in a stronger light, on the one hand, Luther's simplicity, integrity, and firmness; and, on the other, the imperious and unreasonable proceedings of the pope and his ambassador. Since Rome had gained nothing, she had lost; her authority, not having been strengthened, had received a fresh check. What will they say in the Vatican? What messages will be received from Rome? The difficulties of his position will be forgotten; the unlucky issue of this affair will be attributed to his want of skill. Serra Longa and the Italians were furious at seeing themselves, with all their dexterity,

outwitted by a German monk. De Vio could hardly conceal his irritation. Such an insult called for vengeance, and we shall soon witness him breathing out his wrath in a letter to the elector.

CHAPTER 10

Luther's Flight—Admiration—Luther's Desire—The Legate to the Elector—The Elector to the Legate—Prosperity of the University

Luther and his guide continued their flight far from the walls of Augsburg. He spurred his horse, and galloped as fast as the poor animal's strength would permit. He called to mind the real or supposed flight of John Huss, the manner in which he was caught, and the assertion of his adversaries, who pretended that Huss having by his flight annulled the emperor's safe-conduct, they had the right of condemning him to the flames. These anxious thoughts, however, did not long occupy Luther's mind. Having escaped from a city in which he had passed ten days under the terrible hand of Rome, which had already crushed so many thousand witnesses to the truth, and sprinkled all around it with blood,—now that he is free, now that he inhales the fresh breezes of the country, traverses the villages and rural districts, and beholds himself wonderfully delivered by the arm of the Lord, his whole being returns thanks to the Almighty. It is truly he who can now say: Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Thus was Luther's heart overflowing with joy. But his thoughts were turned on De Vio also: "The cardinal would have liked to have me in his hands to send me to Rome. He is vexed, no doubt, at my escape. He imagined I was in his power at Augsburg; he thought he had me; but he was holding an eel by the tail. Is it not disgraceful that these people set so high a value upon me? They would give a heap of crowns to have me in their clutches, while our Lord Jesus Christ was sold for thirty pieces of silver."

The first day he travelled fourteen leagues. When he reached the inn where he was to pass the night, he was so fatigued (his horse was a very hard trotter, an historian tells us) that, when he dismounted, he could not stand upright, and lay down upon a bundle of straw. He nevertheless obtained some repose. On the morrow he continued his journey. At Nuremberg he met with Staupitz, who was visiting the convents of his order. It was in this city that he first saw the brief sent by the pope to Cajetan about him. He was indignant at it, and it is very probable that if he had seen this brief before leaving Wittenberg, he would never have gone to the cardinal. "It is impossible to believe," said he, "that anything so monstrous could have proceeded from any sovereign pontiff."

All along the road Luther was an object of general interest. He had not yet yielded in anyone point. Such a victory, gained by a mendicant monk over the representative of Rome, filled every heart with admiration. Germany seemed avenged

of the contempt of Italy. The eternal Word had received more honour than the word of the pope. This vast power, which for so many centuries tyrannised over the world, had received a formidable check. Luther's journey was like a triumph. Men rejoiced at the obstinacy of Rome, in the hope that it would lead to her destruction. If she had not insisted on preserving her shameful gains; if she had been wise enough not to despise the Germans; if she had reformed crying abuses: perhaps, according to human views, all would have returned to that deathlike state from which Luther had awakened. But the papacy will not yield; and the doctor will see himself compelled to bring to light many other errors, and to go forward in the knowledge and manifestation of the truth.

On the 26th October Luther reached Graefenthal, on the verge of the Thuringian forests. Here he met with Count Albert of Mansfeldt, the same person who had so strongly dissuaded him from going to Augsburg. The count, laughing heartily at his singular equipage, compelled him to stop and be his guest. Luther soon resumed his journey.

He hastened forward, desiring to be at Wittenberg on the 31st October, under the impression that the elector would be there for the festival of All Saints, and that he should see him. The brief which he had read at Nuremberg had disclosed to him all the perils of his situation. In fact, being already condemned at Rome, he could not hope either to stay at Wittenberg, to obtain an asylum in a convent, or to find peace and security in any other place. The elector's protection might perhaps be able to defend him; but he was far from being sure of it. He could no longer expect anything from the two friends whom he had possessed hitherto at the court of this prince. Staupitz had lost the favour he had so long enjoyed, and was quitting Saxony. Spalatin was beloved by Frederick, but had not much influence over him. The elector himself was not sufficiently acquainted with the doctrine of the Gospel to encounter manifest danger for its sake. Luther thought, however, that he could not do better than return to Wittenberg, and there await what the eternal and merciful God would do with him. If, as many expected, he were left unmolested, he resolved to devote himself entirely to study and to the education of youth.

Luther reentered Wittenberg on the 30th of October. All his expedition had been to no purpose. Neither the elector nor Spalatin had come to the feast. His friends were overjoyed at seeing him again amongst them. He hastened to inform Spalatin of his arrival. "I returned to Wittenberg today safe and sound, by the grace of God." said he, "but how long I shall stay here I do not know I am filled with joy and peace, and can hardly conceive that the trial which I endure can appear so great to so many distinguished personages."

De Vio had not waited long after Luther's departure to pour forth all his indignation to the elector. His letter breathes vengeance. He gives Frederick an account of the conference with an air of assurance. "Since brother Martin," says he in conclusion, "cannot be induced by paternal measures to acknowledge his error, and remain faithful to the catholic Church, I beg your highness will send him to Rome, or expel him from your states. Be assured that this difficult, mischievous, and envenomed business cannot be protracted much longer; for so soon as I have informed our most holy lord of all this artifice and wickedness, it will be brought to an end." In a postscript, written with his own hand, the cardinal entreats the elector not to tarnish his honour and that of his illustrious ancestors for the sake of a miserable little friar.

Never perhaps did Luther's soul feel a nobler indignation than when he read the copy of this letter forwarded to him by the elector. The thought of the sufferings he is destined to undergo, the value of the truth for which he is contending, contempt inspired by the conduct of the Roman legate,—all agitated his heart together. His reply, written in the midst of this agitation, is full of that courage, sublimity, and faith which he always displayed in the most trying circumstances of his life. He gives, in his turn, an account of the Augsburg conference; and after describing the cardinal's behaviour, he continues thus:—

"I should like to answer the legate in the place of the elector:

"Prove that you speak of what you understand," I would say to him; "let the whole matter be committed to writing: then I will send brother Martin to Rome, or else I will myself seize him and put him to death. I will take care of my conscience and of my honour, and will permit no stain to tarnish my glory. But so long as your positive knowledge shuns the light, and is made known by its clamours only, I can put no faith in darkness.

"It is thus I would reply, most excellent prince.

"Let the reverend legate, or the pope himself, specify my errors in writing; let them give their reasons; let them instruct me, for I am a man who desires instruction, who begs and longs for it, so that even a Turk would not refuse to grant it. If I do not retract and condemn myself when they have proved that the passages which I have cited ought to be understood in a different sense from mine, then, most excellent elector, let your highness be the first to prosecute and expel me; let the university reject me, and overwhelm me with its anger Nay more, and I call heaven and earth

to witness, may the Lord Jesus Christ cast me out and condemn me! The words that I utter are not dictated by vain presumption, but by an unshaken conviction. I am willing that the Lord God withdraw his grace from me, and that everyone of God's creatures refuse me his countenance, if, when a better doctrine has been shown me, I do not embrace it.

"If they despise me on account of my low estate, me a poor little medicant friar, and if they refuse to instruct me in the way of truth, then let your highness entreat the legate to inform you in writing wherein I have erred. It will cost them less to instruct me when absent by writing, than to put me to death by stratagem when among them.

"I resign myself to banishment. My adversaries are laying their snares on every side, so that I can nowhere live in security. In order that no evil may happen to you on my account, I leave your territories in God's name. I will go wherever the eternal and merciful God will have me. Let him do with me according to his pleasure!

"Thus then, most serene Elector, I reverently bid you farewell. I commend you to the everlasting God, and give you eternal thanks for all your kindness towards me. Whatever be the people among whom I shall dwell in future, I shall ever remember you, and pray continually and gratefully for the happiness of yourself and of your family I am still, thanks to God, full of joy; and praise him because Christ, the Son of God, thinks me worthy to suffer in such a cause. May he ever protect your illustrious highness! Amen."

This letter, so abounding in truth, made a deep impression of the elector. "He was shaken by a very eloquent letter," says Maimbourg. Never could he have thought of surrendering an innocent man to the hands of Rome; perhaps he would have desired Luther to conceal himself for a time, but he resolved not to appear to yield in any manner to the legate's menaces. He wrote to his councillor Pfeffinger, who was at the emperor's court, telling him to inform this prince of the real state of affairs, and to beg him to write to Rome, so that the business might be concluded, or at least that it might be settled in Germany by impartial judges.

A few days after, the elector replied to the legate: "Since Doctor Martin has appeared before you at Augsburg, you should be satisfied. We did not expect that you would endeavour to make him retract, without having convinced him of his errors. None of the learned men in our principality have informed me that Martin's doctrine is impious, antichristian, or heretical." The prince refused, moreover, to send Luther to Rome, or to expel him from his states.

This letter, which was communicated to Luther, filled him with joy. "Gracious God!" wrote he to Spalatin, "with what delight I have read it again and again! I know what confidence may be put in these words, at once so forcible and moderate. I fear that the Romans will not understand their full bearing; but they will at least understand that what they think already finished is as yet hardly begun. Pray, return my thanks to the prince. It is strange that he (De Vio) who, a short time ago, was a mendicant monk like myself, does not fear to address the mightiest princes disrespectfully, to call them to account, to threaten, to command them, and to treat them with such inconceivable haughtiness. Let him learn that the temporal power is of God, and that its glory may not be trampled under foot."

What had doubtless encouraged the elector to reply to the legate in a tone the latter had not expected, was a letter addressed to him by the university of Wittenberg. It had good reason to declare in the doctor's favour; for it flourished daily more and more, and was eclipsing all the other schools. A crowd of students flocked thither from all parts of Germany to hear this extraordinary man, whose teaching appeared to open a new era to religion and learning. These youths who came from every province, halted as soon as they discovered the steeples of Wittenberg in the distance; they raised their hands to heaven, and praised God for having cause the light of truth to shine forth from this city, as from Sion in times of old, and whence it spread even to the most distant countries. A life and activity till then unknown animated the university. "Our students here are as busy as ants," wrote Luther.

CHAPTER 11

Thoughts on Departure—Farewell to the Church—Critical Moment—Deliverance—Luther's Courage—Dissatisfaction at Rome—Bull—Appeal to a Council

Luther, imagining he might soon be expelled from Germany, was engaged in publishing a report of the Augsburg conference. He desired that it should remain as a testimony of the struggle between him and Rome. He saw the storm ready to burst, but did not fear it. He waited from day to day for the anathemas that were to be sent from Italy; and he put everything in order, that he might be prepared when they arrived. "Having tucked up my robe and girt my loins," said he, "I am ready to depart, like Abraham, without knowing whither I go; or rather well knowing, since God is everywhere." He intended leaving a farewell letter behind him. "Be bold enough," wrote he to Spalatin, "to read the letter of an accursed and excommunicated man."

His friends felt great anxiety and fear on his account. They entreated him to deliver up himself as a prisoner into the elector's hands, in order that this prince might keep him somewhere in security.

His enemies could not understand whence he derived his confidence. One day as the conversation turned upon him at the court of the Bishop of Brandenburg, and it was asked on what support he could rely: "On Erasmus," said some; "on Capito, and other learned men who are in his confidence."—"No, no," replied the bishop, "the pope would care very little about those folks. It is in the university of Wittenberg and the Duke of Saxony that he trusts." Thus both parties were ignorant of the stronghold in which the reformer had taken refuge.

Thoughts of departure passed through Luther's mind. They did not originate in fear of danger, but in foresight of the continually increasing obstacles that a free confession of the truth would meet within Germany. "If I remain here," said he, "the liberty of speaking and writing many things will be torn from me. If I depart, I shall freely pour forth the thoughts of my heart, and devote my life to Christ."

France was the country where Luther hoped to have the power of announcing the truth without opposition. The liberty enjoyed by the doctors and university of Paris, appeared to him worthy of envy. Besides, he agreed with them on many points. What would have happened had he been removed from Wittenberg to France? Would the Reformation have been established there, as in Germany? Would the power of Rome have been dethroned there; and would France, which was destined to see the

hierarchical principles of Rome and the destructive principles of an irreligious philosophy long contend within her bosom, have become a great centre of evangelical light? It is useless to indulge in vain conjectures on this subject; but perhaps Luther at Paris might have changed in some degree the destinies of Europe and of France.

Luther's soul was deeply moved. He used to preach frequently in the city church, in the room of Simon Heyens Pontanus, pastor of Wittenberg, who was almost always sick. He thought it his duty, at all events, to take leave of that congregation to whom he had so frequently announced salvation. He said in the pulpit one day: "I am a very unstable and uncertain preacher. How often already have I not left you without bidding you farewell? If this case should happen again, and that I cannot return, accept my farewell now." Then, after adding a few words, he concluded by saying with moderation and gentleness: "Finally, I warn you not to be alarmed, should the papal censures be discharged upon me. Do not blame the pope, or bear any illwill, either to him or to any other man; but trust all to God."

The moment seemed to have come at last. The prince informed Luther that he desired him to leave Wittenberg. The wishes of the elector were too sacred for him not to hasten to comply with them. He therefore made preparations for his departure, without well knowing whither he should direct his steps. He desired however to see his friends once more around him, and with this intent prepared a farewell repast. Seated at the same table with them, he still enjoys their sweet conversation, their tender and anxious friendship. A letter is brought to him....It comes from the court. He opens it and reads; his heart sinks; it contains a fresh order for his departure. The prince enquires, "why he delays so long." His soul was overwhelmed with sadness.

Yet he resumed his courage, and raising his head, said firmly and joyfully, as he turned his eyes on those about him: "Father and mother abandon me, but the Lord takes me up." Leave he must. His friends were deeply moved. What would become of him? If Luther's protector rejects him, who will receive him? And the Gospel, the truth, and this admirable work...all will doubtless perish with its illustrious witness. The Reformation seems to hang upon a thread, and at the moment Luther quits the walls of Wittenberg, will not this thread break? Luther and his friends said little. Struck with the blow that had fallen upon their brother, tears roll down their cheeks. But shortly after, a new messenger arrives. Luther opens the letter, not doubting that it contains a fresh order. But, O powerful hand of the Lord! for a time he is saved. Everything is changed. "Since the pope's new envoy hopes that all may be arranged by a conference, remain for the present." How important was this hour! and what would have happened if Luther, ever anxious to obey his sovereign's will, had left Wittenberg immediately on receiving the first letter? Never were Luther and the

cause of the Reformation lower than at this moment. It appeared that their fate was decided: an instant sufficed to change it. Having reached the lowest degree of his career, the Wittenberg doctor rose rapidly, and his influence from this time continued increasing. The Almighty commands (in the language of the prophet), and his servants go down to the depths, and mount up again to heaven.

By Frederick's order Spalatin summoned Luther to Lichtemberg, to have an interview with him. They conversed a long time on the situation of affairs. "If the censures arrive from Rome," said Luther, "certainly I shall not stay at Wittenberg."—"Beware," said Spalatin, "of being too precipitate in going to France!" He left him, telling him to wait for further orders. "Only commend my soul to Christ," said Luther to his friends. "I see that my adversaries are still more determined in their designs to ruin me; but meanwhile Christ strengthens me in my resolution to concede nothing."

Luther now published his Report of the Conference at Augsburg. Spalatin had written to him, on the part of the elector, not to do so; but the letter came too late. As soon as the publication had taken place, the prince gave his sanction: "Great God!" said Luther in his preface, "what a new, what an amazing crime to seek for light and truth!....and above all in the Church, that is to say, in the kingdom of truth."—"I send you my Report," wrote he to Link: "it is keener no doubt than the legate expects; but my pen is ready to produce much greater things. I do not know myself whence these thoughts arise. In my opinion, the work is not yet begun, so far are the great ones at Rome mistaken in looking for the end. I will send you what I have written, in order that you may judge whether I have guessed rightly that the Antichrist of whom St. Paul speaks now reigns in the court of Rome. I think I shall be able to show that he is worse nowadays than the Turks themselves."

Sinister reports reached Luther from every side. One of his friends wrote to him that the new envoy from Rome had received an order to lay hold of him and deliver him up to the pope. Another related, that while travelling he had met with a courtier, and that the conversation turning on the matters that were now occupying all Germany, the latter declared that he had undertaken to deliver Luther into the hands of the sovereign pontiff. "But the more their fury and their violence increase," wrote the reformer, "the less I tremble."

At Rome they were much displeased with Cajetan. The vexation felt at the illsuccess of this business was at first vented on him. The Roman courtiers thought they had reason to reproach him for having been deficient in that prudence and address which, if we must believe them were the chief qualities in a legate, and for

not having relaxed, on so important an occasion, the strictness of his scholastic theology. It is all his fault, said they. His clumsy pedantry spoiled all. Why did he exasperate Luther by insults and threats, instead of alluring him by the promise of a rich bishopric, or even of a cardinal's hat? These mercenaries judged of the reformer by themselves. Still the failure must be retrieved. On the one hand, Rome must declare herself; on the other, she must conciliate the elector, who might be very serviceable to her in the choice they would soon have to make of an emperor. As it was impossible for Roman ecclesiastics to suspect whence Luther derived his courage and his strength, they imagined that the elector was implicated more deeply in the affair than he really was. The pope therefore resolved to pursue another course.

He caused a bull to be published in Germany by his legate, in which he confirmed the doctrine of indulgences, precisely in the points attacked, but in which he made no mention either of Luther or of the elector. As the reformer had always declared that he would submit to the decision of the Roman church, the pope imagined that he would now either keep his word, or exhibit himself openly as a disturber of the peace of the Church, and a condemner of the holy apostolic see. In either case the pope could not but gain; no advantage however is derived by obstinately opposing the truth. In vain had the pope threatened with excommunication whoever should teach otherwise than he ordained; the light is not stopped by such orders. It would have been wiser to moderate by certain restrictions the pretensions of the sellers of indulgences. This decree from Rome was therefore a new fault. By legalizing crying abuses, it irritated all wise men, and rendered Luther's reconciliation impossible. "It was thought," says a Roman Catholic historian, a great enemy to the Reformation, "that this bull had been issued solely for the benefit of the pope and the begging friars, who began to find that no one would purchase their indulgences."

Cardinal De Vio published the decree at Lintz, in Austria, on the 13th December 1518; but Luther had already placed himself beyond its reach. On the 28th November, he had appealed, in the chapel of Corpus Christi, at Wittenberg, from the pope to a general council of the Church. He foresaw the storm that was about to burst upon him; he knew that God alone could disperse it; but he did what it was his duty to do. He must, no doubt, quit Wittenberg, if only on the elector's account, as soon as the Roman anathemas arrive: he would not, however, leave Saxony and Germany without a striking protest. He therefore drew one up, and that it might be ready for circulation as soon as the Roman thunders reached him, as he expresses it, he had it printed under the express condition that the bookseller should deposit all the copies with him. But this man, covetous of gain, sold almost everyone, while Luther was calmly waiting to receive them. The doctor was vexed, but the thing was done. This bold protest was soon circulated everywhere. In it Luther declared anew that he had

no intention of saying anything against the holy Church or the authority of the apostolic see, and of the pope when well-advised. "But," continues he, "seeing that the pope, who is God's vicar upon earth, may, like any other man, err, sin, and lie, and that an appeal to a general council is the only means of safety against that injustice which it is impossible to resist, I am obliged to have recourse to this step."

Here we see the Reformation launched on a new career. It is no longer made dependent of the pope and on his resolutions, but on a general council. Luther addresses the whole Church, and the voice that proceeds from the chapel of Corpus Christi must be heard throughout all the Lord's fold. The reformer is not wanting in courage; of this he has just given a new proof. Will God be wanting to him? This we shall learn from the different periods of the Reformation that still remain to be displayed before our eyes.